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# Teaching Gender with Libraries and Archives

## The Power of Information

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Edited by Sara de Jong and Sanne Koevoets

# Teaching Gender with Libraries and Archives The Power of Information

*Teaching with Gender. European Women's Studies in  
International and Interdisciplinary Classrooms*

A book series by ATGENDER

ATGENDER. The European Association for Gender Research,  
Education and Documentation  
Utrecht  
&  
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## INTRODUCTION

*Sanne Koevoets and Sara de Jong*

“Teaching Gender with Libraries and Archives: The Power of Information” invites teachers and students in gender and women’s studies to engage with libraries and archives not only as storehouses of knowledge, but also as objects of reflection in their own right. When writing and compiling this volume, we had three specific aims in mind. Firstly, we wanted to highlight how gender studies and the institutions and practices that preserve and disseminate knowledge about gender issues are historically and systematically intertwined. Secondly, we saw the necessity to reflect on the symbolic meaning as well as the institutionalized practices of libraries and archives as they are undergoing profound transformations under the influence of new (technological) developments. Finally, we set out to engage with the question of how these transformations give way to new ways of producing, preserving and disseminating knowledge through feminist practices situated between the force fields of cultural and academic institutions, material and virtual culture, and the collective imaginary.

From its very conception, this project has been an explicit attempt to make visible those spaces, practices and practitioners that have traditionally remained invisible. At the 2011 annual AtGender Spring Conference librarians, archivists, information specialists and researchers met within the context of working group 3, ‘Information and dissemination: infrastructures and networks in Europe and beyond,’ which aims to make information on women and gender visible and accessible. It is a curious paradox that the people (often women) engaged with collecting and disseminating knowledge for and about women - which has been and remains of central importance to the production and emancipatory potential of feminist research - have remained largely invisible themselves. This paradox was succinctly sketched when someone in the meeting suggested that: “Librarians are the housewives of gender studies: the work we do is simply expected to be done, but we are invisible, and the work we do is invisible. It is only when things go wrong that we are noticed.”

Librarianship is widely considered to be a feminized profession. In the United States, librarianship became feminized within 30 years, with 20 percent

of librarians being female in 1870, compared to 80 percent in 1900.<sup>1</sup> This development, by which women quickly entered and came to (quantitatively) dominate the field whereas men retained administrative and managerial positions, has been linked to the dynamics of late 19th century industrial capitalism. As such, the feminization of librarianship in Europe has likely followed a different course than it has in the United States—particularly in post-communist countries. However, little information is available on how librarianship became feminized in Europe. This may very well be an effect of the invisibility and lack of status awarded to feminized professions.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, judging by the unavailability of historical data on the library profession in Europe, European library professionals are suffering from a profound case of invisibility.

This is not to say that the stereotype of the female librarian is not as universally recognized and symbolically powerful in Europe as it is in North America.<sup>3</sup> It has been argued that this stereotype is predicated on sexism and ageism, and that librarians' attempts to subvert the stereotype have only strengthened the underlying sexism of the image. Librarians in the United States were debating how to rid themselves of the stereotype of the 'old fogey bookworm' as early as the 1900s. Some of them insisted that librarians should behave more professionally, whilst others suggested that librarians should be friendlier and keep an open attitude.<sup>4</sup> Both suggestions implicitly reinforce the dual assumptions that women's work is unprofessional (or less so than traditional men's work), and that women should be friendly and serviceable. As such, these strategies sustain the sexist ideologies from which the stereotype can be seen to stem.

Congruent with the lack of historical data on the feminization of the library profession, a critical European voice on the intersections between librarianship and gendered ideology appears to be lacking. From a gender studies perspective it is undeniably problematic if the very field of studies that has aimed to combat gendered historical invisibility and disempowerment should itself reflect or even contribute to the marginalization of a feminized profession. As such, this

<sup>1</sup> Joanne E. Passet, "Men in a Feminized Field: The Male Librarian," *Libraries & Culture* 28 (1993): 386.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Prins and Wilco de Gier, *The Image of the Library and the Information Profession: How We See Ourselves; a report of an empirical study undertaken on behalf of IFLA's Round Table for the Management of Library Associations* (München: K.G. Saur, 1995), 22.

<sup>3</sup> See Sanne Koevoets's article in this volume for a discussion of the stereotype of the female librarian.

<sup>4</sup> Rosalee McReynolds, "A Heritage Dismissed," *Library Journal* 110 (1985): 25–31.

volume should be read as an attempt to explicitly engage with and subvert the sexist stereotype of the docile female librarian by making visible the often unacknowledged work done by the ‘housekeepers of gender studies’.

Most importantly, however, this volume was conceived of as a pedagogical tool, aimed at stimulating gender studies teachers to critically reflect, together with their students, on libraries and archives as profoundly gendered knowledge spaces. Whilst feminist standpoint theory with its recognition that knowledge always emanates from and is produced within a specific situationality is now commonplace, libraries and archives have so far largely escaped critical feminist reflection on their status as both knowledge producers in their own right and as constituted by political, social and cultural knowledge regimes. The conventional understanding of libraries and archives as depositories and repositories of knowledge does not give sufficient impetus to such (post)structural interrogations. Consequently, we have set out to provide an array of different and complementary perspectives both from within and aimed towards libraries and archives, not only as locations, but also as objects of scrutiny. The goal of this volume is thus to ‘open the black box of the library’ through considering the analogies between gender studies research practices and library, archival and ordering practices, in order to consider the challenges involved in preserving and disseminating knowledge about gender issues, as well as producing situated feminist knowledges from within and about the institutional and technological dynamics of libraries and archives. Our starting point is that this consideration is of integral importance to teaching students of gender studies about the political and epistemological challenges of doing gender research.

We showcase the library as a lively, fast changing and thoroughly political space with which students can engage both critically and creatively, and within which lies embedded the possibility of a multitude of feminist practices. The library is revealed to be a central institution of the information age that is both alive and lively, rather than a relic of the past. In this we follow Niegaard’s assertion: “In the global information society, the library’s best days still lie ahead of it, provided it is allocated the necessary resources and permitted to adapt in an age where a greater proportion of the world’s information, knowledge, and cultural services are disseminated digitally.”<sup>5</sup> As such, this book aims to provide inspira-

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<sup>5</sup> Hellen Niegaard, “Library Space and Digital Challenges,” *Library Trends* 60.1 (2011): 175.

tion and guidance to teachers, and to assist them in navigating with their students through the complex dynamics of libraries and archives.

### *Into the labyrinth: exploring libraries and archives*

In order to investigate the multitude of ways in which archives and libraries are interwoven with the fabric of feminist thought and everyday life, we must of course begin with a consideration of what archives and libraries are thought to be and what they are expected to do. The most apt description of libraries and archives is that they (together with museums) are *memory institutions*. The value of archives and libraries is to be found in their contributions to academic, social, economic and personal development. These contributions can be achieved not only through the collection and preservation of the cultural and intellectual record, but also by organizing it in such a way that it becomes accessible and approachable. In this way, they are interwoven into the civic fabric of the collective identity of communities, cities and nations.<sup>6</sup>

Archives and libraries are thus also interwoven with collective and partial gendered identities, and women's archives are historically sustained by the promise that the access they provide to women's history and feminist intellectual, political and cultural work will contribute to emancipation. But this promise is simultaneously a burden: the preservation, organization and dissemination of knowledge are processes encumbered by a multitude of political, economic and technological challenges, and they raise important epistemological and ontological questions. Can collections be organized in such a way as to give access to the truth of past events, or are organizational principles always reflective of current institutional and symbolic paradigms? Do archival sources serve merely as the empirical material by which we produce knowledge, or do archives and libraries also actively participate in the production of knowledge? To what extent does the dream of a 'universal' complete library cover up the fact that every great collection tends to exclude as much as it reveals? Libraries and archives are always and undeniably caught in the dialectic of completeness and accessibility. On the one hand, the dream of a universal library that gives access to all of humanity's greatest achieve-

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<sup>6</sup> Lorcan Dempsey, "Scientific, Industrial, and Cultural Heritage: A Shared Approach," *Ariadne* 22 (2000), <http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue22/dempsey>.

ments and every aspect of historical truth is as pervasive as it was during the construction of the Great Library of Alexandria. This dream is currently gaining new impetus, as digital technologies appear to promise the capacity to more easily collect different kinds of media in one repository.<sup>7</sup> However, such a multitude of archival materials and partial knowledges threatens to devolve into an uncanny *chaosmos* as puzzling and impenetrable as the universe it is supposed to reflect. In order to be accessible and meaningful, knowledge must somehow be ordered and organized according to a recognizable and navigable structure. This demand for organization poses its own dilemmas, which prompted Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) to question whether a library could ever really represent the evolution of knowledge. Since the materiality of books suggests a linear organization, yet knowledge is produced in a non-linear fashion and emanates from networks of cross-references between the disciplines, Leibniz suggested that reference systems tend to atomize knowledge in a way that inhibits rather than capacitates the process of interdisciplinary scientific discovery.<sup>8</sup> A poststructuralist conceptualization of the library may rephrase this dilemma in terms of Michel Foucault's notion of *discursive formations*. Foucault considered principles of classification to be "facts of discourse that deserve to be analyzed beside others."<sup>9</sup> As Gary Radford has argued, the library materializes explicitly the way in which discursive formations organize elements (such as books and magazines) so as to produce coherent meaningful patterns. The production of meaning is intrinsically connected to power structures, and has material effects.<sup>10</sup> Foucault claimed that knowledge is not made for understanding but "for cutting."<sup>11</sup> In his view, the function of knowledge is to make distinctions and categorizations, and so it is always involved in producing difference. Libraries are spaces explicitly *and* reflectively produced by the practices of categorization, and as such they offer a rich ground for exploring how knowledge 'cuts' through the fabric of societies and cultures.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Kirchhoff et al., "Archives, libraries, museums and the spell of ubiquitous knowledge," *Archival Science* 8.4 (2008): 252.

<sup>8</sup> Chris Hart, Manmohan Bains, and Kathryn Jones, "The myth of material knowledge: reading the image of library buildings," *New Library World* 97.3 (1996): 24–25.

<sup>9</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 22.

<sup>10</sup> Gary P. Radford and Marie L. Radford, "Structuralism, post-structuralism, and the library: de Saussure and Foucault," *Journal of Documentation* 61.1 (2005): 69–70.

<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 88.

This poses two challenges to feminist scholars navigating the library space. Firstly, we may ask why books are organized in a certain way. Students of gender studies, often engaged in interdisciplinary studies, will recognize the experience of a library search that sends them from one corner of the library to the other: the works of Freud, classified in the Dewey Decimal system (DDS) under the 100s (philosophy, psychology, etc.), are generally not to be found anywhere near the feminist critiques of his work that resulted from feminist literary studies (under Literature). The DDS was initially conceived as a neutral system that could organize all of the world's knowledge within one logical structure. However, the DDS has been criticized for its resistance to new developments, for favoring a male-centric worldview, and for the way it atomizes knowledge and thus fails to reveal cross-connections between the disciplines. The DDS serves as an example of how the systems used to order library collections can offer fundamental challenges to feminist research projects, and how ordering systems are products of situated perspectives. At the most immediate level, this means that gender studies students need to realize that the situatedness of knowledge production is layered: researcher, teacher and student perspectives are shaped by their own (social, cultural, institutional, etc.) situatedness, but the formulation of certain connections through research is simultaneously suggested or limited by systems of organization that stem from historical traditions. This holds true both for research at large institutional libraries and for research in smaller feminist archives—it just does so differently.

The second challenge concerns the fact that, as Radford suggests, “the arrangement of real books on real library shelves giv[es] rise to real experiences”.<sup>12</sup> In addition to untangling how libraries may reflect and propagate the privileging of certain kinds of knowledge over others, students of gender studies should be invited and encouraged to reflect on how such epistemic privileging feeds into and strengthens forms of social and cultural marginalization that give way to real and lived experiences of marginalization. Such archival effects are not merely a mirage.

Additionally, it should be noted that libraries and (most notably) archives are no longer exclusively storehouses for the paper record. Digital technologies are transforming libraries and archives into virtual spaces for storing, organiz-

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<sup>12</sup> Gary P. Radford and Marie L. Radford, “Structuralism, post-structuralism, and the library: de Saussure and Foucault,” *Journal of Documentation* 61.1 (2005): 70.



ing and making available an explosively expanding multimedia record. As feminist scholars, we need to explore how these transformations are reshaping the archive, since, as Jacques Derrida has argued, the technologies of *archivization* define and limit what *can* be archived. His argument is profoundly political: archivization structures history and memory; in doing so, it structures the relationship between the present and the past. He states: “Archivization produces as much as it records the event.”<sup>13</sup> While Derrida’s conception of the archive is often read as a metaphor, it rather offers an analysis of the way in which technologies of archivization frame the ways we relate to and within the world. Marlene Manoff aptly summarizes his argument as follows: “The methods for transmitting information shape the nature of the knowledge that can be produced. [...] Electronic archives have very different implications for the historical record than do paper archives.”<sup>14</sup> Now that archives and libraries are facing the transformation from (mostly) paper records to (partly or exclusively) digital records, students should be invited to engage with the question of what Derrida coined *archival violence*. Derrida claimed that “there is no political power without control of the archive”,<sup>15</sup> and that archival power involves complex and elusive processes of exclusion masked as selection. Students of gender studies must develop a critical awareness of how libraries and archives not only store documents of the past, but also effectively produce the present, in order to reflect on the possibilities they offer for shaping feminist futures. In order to do so, they should be challenged to read along and against the archival grain.<sup>16</sup>

### *A thematic investigation of (teaching in) women’s Lib(raries)*

We divided the contributions to this volume into three themes, with a view to capacitating teachers of gender studies to investigate, together with their students, the different forms of engagement with the past, the present and the future that are inscribed in and formulated through libraries and archives. Each section

<sup>13</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 17.

<sup>14</sup> Marlene Manoff, “Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines,” *Libraries and the Academy* 4.1 (2004): 12.

<sup>15</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 4 (note 1).

<sup>16</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).



includes theoretical discussions alongside practitioner perspectives, in order to make clear the entanglements between theory and practice in knowledge spaces. The articles presenting analyses of empirical examples are 'sandwiched' in between the first and the last articles, which are more theoretical in nature and focus on (re)conceptualizations of the archive and library.

The first theme revolves around the feminist histories and legacies, both as they are preserved, made accessible and are produced inside of libraries and archives and in terms of the parallels in the development of women's/feminist and gender libraries and archives on the one hand, and gender studies as an academic discipline on the other. Because we begin our investigation into the legacies and histories in and of libraries and archives through stating the connections with gender studies, the 'histories' we refer to go back to the Second Wave of feminism. The first article (De Jong and Wieringa) traces the transformation of a women's library along the development of feminist epistemologies, whilst the article 'Parallels in the history of women's/gender studies and its special libraries' (Aleksander) shows that the gender library is invaluable for illustrating the history of gender studies. Finally, Radicioni and Virtú investigate how activist libraries based in the LGBT and feminist movements navigated dilemmas of professionalization.

The second theme, 'Practices' engages with the question of archival and library practices from a feminist perspective. How do ways of collecting, ordering and preserving the historical and cultural record influence the kind of knowledge that can be produced and disseminated about gender and feminism? How are the practices of archivization, of archival research and of teaching on and in libraries and archives related? The emphasis on practices allowed us to focus on the political aspects of the everyday activities that take place in and around libraries and archives, and show how these practices emanate from a radical situatedness of all actors involved. The articles present a number of case studies, and travel from Icelandic municipal archives (Bogadóttir) to an academic library in Cyprus (Baider and Zobnina) and to an archive in Brussels that aims to empower women in the Maghreb region through information (Claeys). It traces the creation of a European digital database of feminist texts (De Jong, Vriend and Meulmeester), and the ways this database has served as a learning tool in an 'English as a Foreign Language' class in France (Perry).

The third theme was given the hopeful title 'Utopias'. In this section, we begin to formulate how the challenges created by the move towards digitalization

also offer new possibilities for constructing feminist libraries and archives and for experimenting with feminist ways of relating to and within these knowledge spaces. The first article of this section shows libraries as active and dynamic sites of knowledge production that challenge the mainstream and re-create new cultural memories (Maxwell). The closing article by Koevoets aims to formulate new feminist figurations of female librarianship in the information age.

The three themes offer a variety of partial perspectives on archives and libraries, from disciplines ranging from library and information science to language education, and from sociology to cultural studies. What all authors have in common is the belief that archives and libraries are complex nodes in the networks of knowledge production, and that it is time that we begin to fill the gap in knowledge about the significance of these spaces for the development and successful progression of gender studies teaching and research. Moreover, the volume presents a strong case for considering archival practices—be they the practices of the information specialist, the teacher, the researcher or the student—to be part of the specific competences of gender studies.

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SECTION 1

# HISTORIES/LEGACIES



## THE LIBRARY AS KNOWLEDGE BROKER

*Sara de Jong and Saskia Wieringa*

The traditional task of an archive is to store and preserve material, largely in a written format, about a particular person, event, phenomenon, movement or time period, to be used at a later date and/or by a larger group of people. A library is a collection of books for the use of scholars and other readers. The major goal of a women's library and/or archive is to preserve the heritage of women and their movements, and to contribute to emancipation through disseminating knowledge about gender issues. Decisions on what to preserve and what to collect are made by the archivist, the librarian and their staff. This knowledge chain has been in place in women's libraries and archives from the moment of their conception and construction. In the case of the IAV (International Archive for the Women's Movement) in Amsterdam, this was in 1935.

However, the postmodern as well as the poststructuralist and more recently the digital turn seem to have broken down this knowledge chain. In this article we discuss these developments and point to present and future conceptualizations of libraries and archives in relation to the production of knowledge. The change from a positivist to a feminist empiricist or standpoint epistemology took place in the 1970s and 1980s and produced a feminist epistemology that posed new questions pertaining to gendered knowledge and (feminist) science. Although these developments led to new suggestions concerning the adjustment of 'malestream' history and the reinsertion of women as actors in history, they could still be incorporated within the traditional archive/library paradigm relatively unproblematically. Whereas feminist empiricist and standpoint epistemologies focus on the absence of women's and other marginalized perspectives in the archive as a *corrective* of the historical record, aspire to a fuller picture, and want to produce a more 'true' account of history, postmodern theory fundamentally questions any truth claims or grand historical narratives that may emerge from the library space.

The digital turn heralded a time in which large amounts of primary materials are accessible via the web. The library/archive no longer appears to be primarily a physical space; rather it is also increasingly a virtual space. A specialized

archive-cum-library is expected to be accessible worldwide; on the one hand, it will collect and preserve the digital record, while on the other it will function as a social space for the sharing and collective production of knowledge. The library thus seems to simultaneously become both more global and more local.

Accordingly, the poststructuralist, postmodern, and digital turns of the past few decades pose new challenging questions, both for the practitioners of postmodern librarianship and for the scholarly community of students, teachers and researchers who engage with the library. These questions, as well as the different answers that have been proposed, have far-reaching implications for the role of the library and its relation with its users. In this article we will trace the historical trajectory of the I(I)AV in Amsterdam to Aletta, Institute for Women's History,<sup>1</sup> in order to discuss the transformations that libraries are undergoing and to argue in favor of a post-structural and postmodern perspective on the library.

### *Preserving and inserting women's history*

The International Archives for the Women's Movement (IAV) was founded in Amsterdam in 1935. The profiles of its three founders—Johanna Naber (historian), Rosa Manus (a leader in the international women's suffrage and peace movements) and Willemijn Posthumus-van der Goot (the first woman with a PhD in economics in The Netherlands and author of several scientific studies on women's labor)—is reflected in its original mission: to preserve the cultural heritage of the women's movement for future generations. There was a sense of urgency as the protagonists of the first wave of the Dutch women's movement, such as Aletta Jacobs (who had left her collection of movement papers and books to Rosa Manus), were dying. The initial goal of the IAV was thus to preserve their legacy, so that future generations could learn from their experiences. Additionally, the institute was to promote knowledge and scientific study of the women's movement in the broadest sense, both nationally and internationally. From the very beginning the archival staff of the IAV—which included its founders—also

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<sup>1</sup> In 2012 Aletta, Institute for Women's History merged with E-Quality Information Centre for Gender, Family and Diversity Issues. The new organization has a broader mandate and also carries out advocacy and projects related to gender issues. In January 2013 the organization was renamed Atria, Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History.

published articles and conducted research. In 1937, for instance, they published a survey among the ‘Veterans of the Women’s Movement’.<sup>2</sup>

Until the Second World War the IAV was active on three fronts: the academic field, the national emancipation struggle and the international women’s rights and peace movements. International and research-oriented, these were the key concepts of the IAV’s founders. Without compromising on these principles, the emphasis later shifted to the history of the Dutch women’s movement, and to emancipation and empowerment; later the inclusion of the heritage of migrant women in The Netherlands became a focal point. During recent decades, discussions have centered on how to collect material relevant to its mission, without privileging the mainstream of the Dutch women’s movement—consisting mainly of white middle-class feminists—which was traditionally linked to the institute. More concretely, the question became: how to collect the memories of migrant women and of women of other marginalized groups that have not always left behind minutes or other paper documents of their meetings (which often took place at their kitchen tables, in the factories where they worked, or in other unofficial or non-institutionalized locations). This necessitated two policy shifts. First, new links had to be forged with those groups and representatives of earlier groups of Black, Migrant and Refugee Women (as they called themselves). Secondly, new methods, such as oral history, had to be mobilized to collect these materials.

### *The development of women’s studies*

Women’s studies gained momentum in the wake of the so-called second wave of the women’s movement, from the 1970s until the 1990s. The emphasis on feminist epistemology, spearheaded by writers such as Hartsock<sup>3</sup> and Harding,<sup>4</sup> offered a critique of ‘male science’ and provoked a renewed interest in women’s perspectives, in order to either fill in the gaps in or to rewrite mainstream history.

<sup>2</sup> For the early history of the IAV see Francisca de Haan, “A ‘Truly International’ Archive for the Women’s Movement (IAV, now IIAV): From its foundation in Amsterdam in 1935 to the return of its looted archives in 2003,” *Journal of Women’s History* 16.4 (2004): 148–72; Francisca de Haan and Annette Mevis, “The IAV/IIAV’s Archival Policy and Practice; Seventy years of Collecting, Receiving and Refusing Women’s Archives (1935–2005),” in *Traveling Heritages; New Perspectives on Collecting, Preserving and Sharing Women’s History*, ed. Saskia E. Wieringa (Amsterdam: Aksant 2008), 23–47.

<sup>3</sup> Nancy Hartsock, *The Feminist Standpoint Revisited & Other Essays* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986); ---, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women’s Lives* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1991).



Two approaches dominated this first phase of feminist history-writing: feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint theory. Feminist empiricists argued that the empirical, positivist method of doing research was not wrong in itself, but that the sexist and androcentric biases present in much research needed to be eliminated. Standpoint theorists went a major step further, arguing that value-free science is an *a priori* impossibility. They held that research is always a political enterprise, informed by biases relating to the position of the researcher, the selection of methods and the use of results. Thus they insisted on taking the perspectives of women as well as those of other marginalized groups as the starting point for research and claimed that such a point of departure would lead to “less partial and distorted accounts of [...] the whole social order”.<sup>5</sup> As Harding emphasizes in the introduction to the 2004 *Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*, standpoint theory has both an explanatory and a normative component.<sup>6</sup> The aim of standpoint theory was to maximize objectivity, resulting in what was called a ‘strong objectivity’ characterized by a rigorous reflexivity of one’s situatedness.

Women’s history became a critical topic in the women’s studies courses that sprang up all over academia, where the work of feminist historians such as Kelly,<sup>7</sup> Kleinberg<sup>8</sup> and Lerner<sup>9</sup> was widely read. This was a heyday for women’s libraries and archives. The collections were widely used by expanding groups of students, activists and scholars. A renewed interest in ‘common women’ also entailed new ways of collecting information, and an interest in new sources, such as personal documents and oral history.<sup>10</sup> That collecting information on women’s issues and

<sup>5</sup> Sandra Harding, “Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is ‘Strong Objectivity’?”, in *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, ed. Sandra Harding (New York: Routledge, 2004), 128.

<sup>6</sup> Sandra Harding, “Introduction: Standpoint Theory as a Site of Political, Philosophic, and Scientific Debate,” in *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, ed. Sandra Harding (New York: Routledge, 2004), 2.

<sup>7</sup> Joan Kelly, *Women, History and Theory; the Essays of Joan Kelly* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

<sup>8</sup> Jay S. Kleinberg, *Retrieving Women’s History; Changing Perceptions of the Role of Women in Politics and Society* (Oxford: Berg, 1988).

<sup>9</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>10</sup> See for research into the collection of personal documents of the IIAV: Mineke Bosch, “A Woman’s Life in a Soapbox. The Collection of Personal Documents of Women in the Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging in Amsterdam,” *History Workshop Journal. A Journal of Socialist and Feminist Historian* 24 (1987): 166–70. See for an analysis of the video documentaries based on oral history that the IIAV started collecting after 2005: Grietje Keller and Josien Pieterse, “Dance around the camera—experiences with recording video oral history from the second wave women’s movement,” in *Traveling Heritages; New Perspectives on Collecting, Preserving and Sharing Women’s History*, ed. Saskia E. Wieringa (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008), 229–43.

movements is itself a process full of biases and assumptions was pointed out by Withuis. She documented how shifts in the collection policy of the IAV over time partly reflected the personal contacts and interests of the staff as well as their blind spots.<sup>11</sup>

During the so-called second wave of feminism and with the emergence of women's studies programs, there was also a growing need for the improved accessibility of library resources. As existing mainstream thesaurus systems were gender-stereotyping and the old indexing system used at the IAV could not adequately capture the new developments, in 1987 the IAV, together with Flemish partner organizations, started developing a Dutch women's thesaurus. Ten years later, in 1997 a project was launched to develop a European Women's Thesaurus, which has now even been translated into non-European languages such as Japanese and Farsi.<sup>12</sup> The thesaurus includes an ever growing number of keywords regarding the position of women and women's/gender studies. This online thesaurus, which is integrated in the search engine, serves as a tool to index and retrieve information in collections of the institute as well as in other libraries and archives and provides access to rich cross-references and multiple levels of relationships between keywords. As such, this thesaurus is more than a tool that facilitates access to texts; the way it facilitates certain research and learning practices can be an object of inquiry in itself.

A first major advance in women's and gender studies was its breaking through the boundaries between the so-called 'public' and 'private' spheres by analyzing the shifting power nexus between them and by showing how the distinction served to maintain a hierarchy between 'female' activities conducted in the private sphere versus 'male' activities in the public sphere. Most importantly, the famous radical feminist slogan 'the personal is political', pointed to the fact that issues that were traditionally understood as 'personal', taking place in the private sphere, e.g. domestic abuse, were tightly connected to a public sphere in which women were devalued. Next, under the influence of cultural studies,

<sup>11</sup> Jolande Withuis, "'Een Schatkamer van Feministische Kostbaarheden'. Het Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging tussen 1935 en 1952: Betrokkenen, Beweegredenen, Beleid," in *De Jurk van de Kosmonaute: Over Politiek, Cultuur en Psyche*, ed. Jolande Withuis (Amsterdam: Boom, 1995), 114–41.

<sup>12</sup> Tilly Vriend, "It's a Women's World in the Women's Thesaurus: on the history, development and use of the (European) Women's Thesaurus," in *Women's Memory: the Problem of Sources: 20th anniversary symposium of the Women's Library and Information Centre Foundation*, ed. D. Fatma Ture and Birsan Talay Kesoglu (Istanbul: Kadir Has University, 2009), 1–12. Available from: [http://www.aletta.nu/epublications/2009/Tilly\\_Vriend.pdf](http://www.aletta.nu/epublications/2009/Tilly_Vriend.pdf).

the boundaries between so-called highbrow and lowbrow culture were put into question, which challenged the idea that certain cultural expressions were more worthy of study than others.<sup>13</sup> Later, in the process of crossing the boundaries between the academic disciplines, women's and gender studies ruptured the boundaries of identity categories as well, including those related to ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion. The IAV's library collection expanded to cater to all these new interests.

### *The postmodern turn and the digital age*

The mission of the IIAV/Aletta has remained basically unchanged since its inception. Its founders had a unique combination of academic excellence, international acumen and commitment to the women's cause<sup>14</sup> and this is still reflected in the aims and policies of Aletta. What has changed considerably is the academic discipline of historical investigation. The discursive, poststructuralist turn in women's and gender studies that has been gaining momentum from the 1990s onwards has profoundly influenced gender history as well as other disciplines.<sup>15</sup>

Under the influence of postmodernism, historians have moved away from the search for 'pure facts' and 'simple truths' (which were supposedly waiting to be discovered in archives and could be found by 'objective' methods), in favor of situated approaches that produce partial perspectives. Women's historians are no longer only searching for ignored heroines or the forgotten aspects of history; nor do they only insist that all histories are gendered and that therefore gender aspects need to be addressed everywhere. Women's historians now realize that even if a women's canon is unmarred by a serious gender bias, it may still contain other biases. 'Adding' the histories of migrant women to the white mainstream histories only defers the problem. Every decision to focus on a specific issue means that a choice is made and possibly another bias introduced. Any effort to freeze a master (mistress) narrative excludes other narratives. Objects and docu-

<sup>13</sup> Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms," *Media, Culture and Society* 2 (1980): 57.

<sup>14</sup> Francisca de Haan en Annette Mevis, "The IAV/IIAV's Archival Policy and Practice; Seventy Years of Collecting, Receiving, and Refusing Women's Archives (1935–2005)," in *Traveling Heritages; New Perspectives on Collecting, Preserving and Sharing Women's History*, ed. Saskia E. Wieringa (Amsterdam: Askant, 2008), 23–47.

<sup>15</sup> Clare Hemmings, "The Life and Times of Academic Feminism: Checking the Vital Signs of Women's and Gender Studies," in *Traveling Heritages; New Perspectives on Collecting, Preserving and Sharing Women's History*, ed. Saskia E. Wieringa (Amsterdam: Askant, 2008), 263–85.

ments in the archive “cannot provide direct and unmediated access to the past”.<sup>16</sup> If we have learnt anything from postmodern epistemologies it is that ‘truth’ is always provisional, and bound to the context in which it is produced.

New questions have cropped up, while the old ones have not become obsolete. Whose histories are being collected? And for whose benefit? These questions are still as relevant as ever. At the same time, poststructuralist insights have raised the question whether we should limit ourselves to the history of women. What is a woman anyway? In search for answers to these questions, the institute underwent a shift in both content and methods of collecting—not only documents and facts are important, but also memories and points of view. Just as people migrate throughout the world, concepts also travel in time and space. The meaning of concepts such as ‘womanhood’ or ‘gender’ change over time, and differ between cultures, classes and religions.<sup>17</sup> From this perspective, the image of archives as treasure troves where that one single ‘truth’ about an organization or the movement as a whole can be dug up has become untenable. Instead, archives can serve as sources of inspiration and theoretical reflection for a large complex group of people with multiple identities.

In his seminal essay “Archive Fever”, Jacques Derrida deconstructs the notion of the archive, which has influenced theories about the archive within library studies as well as in other disciplines.<sup>18</sup> He emphasizes how the archive is always simultaneously ‘institutive’ and ‘conservative’;<sup>19</sup> archives do not merely record, but rather *produce* events through the available technologies. As Marlene Manoff, director of the humanities library at MIT, recounts, one of Derrida’s claims is that Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis was shaped by the technologies of communication at that time, and consequently, psychoanalytical theory would have been transformed by the availability of other technologies.<sup>20</sup>

While every archive is always technological and marked by its technological ramifications, the digital turn makes Derrida’s observation even more

<sup>16</sup> Marlene Manoff, “Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines,” *Libraries and the Academy* 4.1 (2004): 14.

<sup>17</sup> The above paragraph is adapted from Saskia E. Wieringa, “The (Sexual) Revolution of the Amsterdam Women’s Archives and Library,” in *Traveling Heritages New Perspectives on Collecting, Preserving and Sharing Women’s History*, ed. Saskia E. Wieringa (Amsterdam: Aksant 2008), 9–23.

<sup>18</sup> Marlene Manoff, “Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines,” *Libraries and the Academy* 4.1 (2004): 9.

<sup>19</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,” *Diacritics* 25.2 (1995): 12.

<sup>20</sup> Marlene Manoff, “The Materiality of Digital Collections: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives,” *Libraries and the Academy* 6.3 (2006): 321.

concrete and has made some of the aforementioned postmodernist-inspired questions even more urgent. Many library scholars have observed that with the advent of the (digital) knowledge society, libraries were forced to radically adapt their practices. In Laura Cohen's much cited work 'A Librarian's 2.0 Manifesto', published in 2006, librarians are called upon to embrace the developments of the new information age and to be proactive in learning about and incorporating new technologies in order to develop the library.<sup>21</sup> From a Derridean perspective, these new technologies would create as well as destroy the archive, as they significantly alter the way knowledge is 'conserved' and made available. Since 2005, under the lead of a webmaster and supported by a new PR department, the IIAV has begun to advance its services according to many suggestions later included in A Librarian's 2.0 Manifesto. One of the 'commandments' of Cohen reads: "I will be willing to go where users are, both online and in physical spaces, to practice my profession."<sup>22</sup> As all libraries and archives, the IIAV also experienced a decrease of visitors to the physical space the institute inhabited until 2011, though since its move to a more central location in Amsterdam visitor numbers are on the rise again. Simultaneously, there has been a marked increase in the use of its websites. The institute mobilizes social networking sites Facebook and Twitter to collect a growing number of friends and followers; its online presence also extends to Wikipedia and YouTube. Its successful blogging website<sup>23</sup> provides a platform both for guest bloggers and staff members. Indeed, the Institute has not waited passively for users to come, but has entered virtual places to find them, to assess their needs and attempt to meet them. It has also been using a variety of online media platforms, including YouTube, to "tell the library's story", which David Lee King (2007) suggests is the most important competency of a 2.0 librarian.<sup>24</sup>

Cohen further suggests that the librarian 2.0 "will create open Web sites that allow users to join with librarians to contribute content in order to enhance their

<sup>21</sup> Laura Cohen, "A Librarian's 2.0 Manifesto," *Library 2.0: An Academic's Perspective*, posted 8 November 2006, [http://liblogs.albany.edu/library20/2006/11/a\\_librarians\\_20\\_manifesto.html](http://liblogs.albany.edu/library20/2006/11/a_librarians_20_manifesto.html).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> 'www.talkroaletta.nu'

<sup>24</sup> David Lee King, "Basic Competencies of a 2.0 Librarian," *The David Lee King Blog*, comment posted 5 July 2007, <http://www.davidleeking.com/2007/07/05/basic-competencies-of-a-20-librarian/#UFnnn0ZjWf4>. (accessed 21 September 2012)

learning experience and provide assistance to their peers”.<sup>25</sup> In the project ‘Back in a Bite’, which kick-started in 2009, first and second generation migrant women were invited to record their life stories and recipes through video oral history interviews. While some oral history interviews were conducted by Aletta herself, the target group was also encouraged to submit their own video recordings in order to create a shared archive. In this way, the institute seeks to be a real but also virtual community center, involving an extended group of users in the writing of their own histories and using new technologies to advance inclusive practices.<sup>26</sup>

As the record becomes increasingly digitalized and is made accessible through huge search engines, a relatively small institute like the IIAV/Aletta faces an increasing number of dilemmas. How can such an institute preserve its unique position as the major repository of material from both the ‘first’ and the ‘second’ waves of the women’s movement and of much that happened before between and after those waves, in a world that is characterized by the paradigm of universal access?<sup>27</sup> Around 2010 the acquisition policies of the institute were refined to privilege the collection of digital material over print where possible. At the same time, the institute stepped up its efforts to digitalize large parts of its collection in collaboration with partners in the library or publishing world. Together with other special libraries its collection was integrated in the NCC catalogue (*Nederlandse Centrale Catalogus*), making it accessible via WorldCat (the free accessible world catalogue). Another good example of these changes is the acquisition of digital access to the Gerritsen collection, in collaboration with the University of Groningen. Gerritsen was the husband of Aletta Jacobs, who built up a major collection on women’s issues before the Second World War. After his death the collection was sold abroad and lost to Dutch users. However, through digitalization it has become accessible once again. The IIAV also collaborated with Alexander Press, a commercial publisher, to make parts of the IIAV collection accessible within a larger collection on the history of the women’s movement worldwide. In

<sup>25</sup> Laura Cohen, “A Librarian’s 2.0 Manifesto,” Library 2.0: An Academic’s Perspective, posted 8 November 2006, [http://liblogs.albany.edu/library20/2006/11/a\\_librarians\\_20\\_manifesto.html](http://liblogs.albany.edu/library20/2006/11/a_librarians_20_manifesto.html).

<sup>26</sup> Eileen de los Reyes, “Becoming Pockets of Hope: The Challenge to Academic Libraries in the 21st Century,” in *Crossing the Divide: Conference Proceedings ACRL Tenth National Conference*, ed. Hugh A. Thompson (USA: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2001), 28–9.

<sup>27</sup> The history of women’s movements worldwide is long and various authors mark different beginnings. Yet usually the designation ‘first’ wave is used for that part of the movement that started in the late nineteenth century, and ‘second’ wave for that phase that started in the late 1960s. We follow this popular usage here.



exchange for the contribution of the IIAV the institute gained access to materials from many libraries around the world. It is through such collaborative, digital practices that the IIAV/Aletta has safeguarded its relevance as the primary archive and research institute on women's history in The Netherlands.

However, not only library practice needs to change; library and information sciences also need to formulate new paradigms that can effectively capture the postmodern library.<sup>28</sup> Gary Radford argues that the positivist emphasis on libraries as spaces of rationality, order and structure is outdated and unable to grasp the specific complexities of libraries in the digital age. Drawing on Foucault's 1967/1977 essay "La Bibliothèque Fantastique", Radford proposes a postmodern epistemology of the library, which favors creativity, fantasy and fluidity in the library experience. Texts (understood as written, as well as oral and other types of documentation and recording) can no longer be understood and treated as having stable meanings and values independent of their context and material instantiation. Radford's analysis has far-reaching implications for understanding the position of the librarian and her/his relation with the user of the library: "With the development of increasingly sophisticated information technologies, the location of specific texts or facts may not be the primary issue in most library searches, and the role of the librarian as a fact provider is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. [...] The librarian's role becomes that of a guide, not only to the pre-existing order of the library that comprises its catalogues and indexes, but to the creation of new orders developed and made possible by the capabilities of computer searching."<sup>29</sup>

After years of delivering skills-based library courses to students, Ellen Broidy, librarian at UC Irvine, realized that the information age required her to move beyond mere searching skills, and to engage with the gendered politics of information. With this in mind, she co-developed the course 'Gender and the Politics of Information', which, among other things, aimed to make students aware of the gendered nature of information. In her view, this is of central importance to understanding the technologized present of the information age in which both librarians and library users find themselves.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Gary P. Radford, "Flaubert, Foucault, and the Bibliothèque Fantastique: Toward a Postmodern Epistemology for Library Science," *Library Trends* 46.4 (1998): 617.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 630.

<sup>30</sup> Ellen Broidy, "Gender and the Politics of Information: Reflections on Bringing the Library into the Classroom," *Library Trends* 56.2 (2007): 501.

Hence, not only library and information science needs to find new paradigms to understand the postmodern library. Library users, particularly those with an interest in women's and gender studies, need to *both* find new conceptualizations to engage with the changing institute of the library *and* start asking new questions about past library practices. In the same way that empiricist and standpoint feminism inspired critical inquiries of the malestream library, postmodern and poststructural (feminist) theories should invite new forms of engagement with libraries and archives, departing from the recognition that the libraries are constituted *by* knowledge practices as well as constitutive *of* knowledge practices.

### *Suggested assignments*

- What are the different technologies of knowledge that your women's/gender/feminist library offers, including books, diary, oral history tapes, posters, digital journal articles, DVDs, photographs and sheet music, and are these digitalized or in other formats? What are the implications of these different modalities of materiality for knowledge production and knowledge dissemination? Think about the opportunities offered by the library's technologies and consider their limitations.
- How does your women's/gender/feminist library define women/gender/feminism? Have these definitions shifted during the history of the institute and if so, how has this impacted upon the collection policies? What exclusions, silences and gaps are present in these definitions?
- Map the different and discontinuous knowledge chains your library is involved in. Who can be seen as actors in these knowledge webs? Organizations, persons, computers, events? How does the production and dissemination of knowledge take shape in these webs of knowledge exchange?

### *The library as knowledge creator and knowledge broker*

To further conceptualize the changing position of women's libraries and feminist libraries today, and of the changing relationships between librarians, library users and library spaces, it is instructive to complement Radford's Foucauldian intervention with insights from poststructuralist feminist theories. In this section we will argue that students cannot only find poststructuralist feminist theory



in the library, but can discover how it is also *about* the library. From this point of view, we can observe that with regards to texts—that is, the materials in the library and/or accessible through the library—a democratization of knowledge takes place not only through the technological advancements of our era, but also through the revaluing of multiple knowledges in the *plural*, capacitated by insights from postmodern feminist theory.

What Radford fails to note is that the librarian's changing role as a guide instead of a fact provider is not a neutral one; s/he is always situated. As Elizabeth Yakel observed, this understanding is often lacking among library users: "Users can be largely unaware of the invisible archival role and responsibility behind the data they are using, particularly in a networked environment. Thus, they may see the role of the archivist as essentially preserving the data or perhaps managing the information, but not as having anything to do with knowledge creation."<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Hope Olson has argued that cataloguing practices are not neutral. Comparing the position of information specialists with researchers, she states: "Our theories, models and descriptions, applied in our role as intermediaries between people and information, are as presumptuous and controlling as scientists' construction and containment of nature."<sup>32</sup> The aforementioned Women's Thesaurus, for example, is not just a technological tool, but a 'woman-made' creation reflecting the situated understandings of information specialists, who by creating the thesaurus established linkages between different concepts. The library is not just the gateway to knowledge, but also a *knowledge broker* and *knowledge creator* in its own right. An insight into the conceptualization of those two positions is crucial for students and researchers when engaging with the library and archive.

In the case of IIAV/Aletta, the role of the library as a knowledge creator can be taken very literally. Apart from storing information and making it accessible to its users, it accepted that a small specialized library had to become more pro-active, and set up a modest research department in 2005. This IIAV research department aimed to support the analysis of the processes and dynamics of organizing against gender, ethnic and other hierarchies. But it also became concretely involved in the creation of knowledge, for instance through a project

<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth Yakel, "Thinking Inside and Outside the Boxes: Archival Reference Services at the Turn of the Century," *Archivaria* 49 (2000): 152.

<sup>32</sup> Hope A. Olson, *The Power to Name: Locating the Limits of Subject Representation in Libraries* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 4.

of making video oral histories of women who were active in the 'second wave' of the women's movement. This ambitious collaborative<sup>33</sup> project (the aim is to collect 100 video portraits) was kick-started with the production of a documentary about the women's health movement based on oral history interviews. The project will be expanded to incorporate video portraits of representatives of all major elements of the Second Wave of the Dutch women's movement. In many cases the paper archives are already available at our institute, but the medium of film can record such other dimensions as emotions or possible disconnects between words uttered and body language.<sup>34</sup> The IIAV has been using technology innovatively to expand its oral history collection. For instance, a search function based on speech recognition was developed for its video oral history collection in collaboration with Twente University.

Libraries can also be seen to produce knowledge through their choices for particular forms of material and modes of access to material. As Manoff identifies, there is an increasing awareness that the materiality of sources is a valuable object of study in the context of knowledge production.<sup>35</sup> 'Real' as well as virtual texts have a material embodiment; the latter sometimes mediated by hardware such as computers.<sup>36</sup> Different types of material and different forms of transmission of one identical text (in terms of content) can alter the ways in which it can be received, used and created as knowledge. For example, the method of recording video oral histories creates a different kind of knowledge from written documentation about the same topic, while the search technology of speech recognition produces new logics, structures and connections from conventional search engines. Hence, librarians who consider accessibility and efficiency in evaluating the use of technologies are engaged in practical and fundamental issues about knowledge production. They are not a neutral portal but play a significant role in the knowledge creation process. As Manoff claims, this implies that "we need to educate future librarians to understand their role in transformations that are

<sup>33</sup> The project was executed in collaboration with Utrecht University.

<sup>34</sup> Grietje Keller and Josien Pieterse, "Dance Around the Camera – Experiences with Recording Video Oral History from the Second Wave Women's Movement," in *Traveling Heritages; New Perspectives on Collecting, Preserving and Sharing Women's History*, ed. Saskia E. Wieringa (Amsterdam: Askant, 2008); Josien Pieterse, "Het Gedeelde Archief: over de Dilemma's van het Open Archief," *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies* 15.2 (2012): 43.

<sup>35</sup> Marlene Manoff, "The Materiality of Digital Collections: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives," *Libraries and the Academy* 6.3 (2006): 311–25.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

inseparable from the history of technological and cultural development”.<sup>37</sup> It also means that teachers need to educate their students about the role of libraries as knowledge creators rather than mere repositories of knowledge.

As Partridge et al. observe, “libraries are no longer about books or even information”.<sup>38</sup> They quote Mackenzie to state that the new role of libraries is “facilitating people to participate, interact and create, to provide the means for that to happen”.<sup>39</sup> This can happen both online, through Facebook, Twitter and blogs, as well as in physical spaces. Two surveys about the use of Danish public libraries in 2004 and 2005, found that more than half of the users come to the library for reasons other than collecting books. For instance, they come to meet people, to work and to study.<sup>40</sup> The library has taken over a traditional role of the ‘church’ as the community meeting space of the information age.<sup>41</sup> Through the establishment of its own research department and its seminars and publications, Aletta also sought to take the position of knowledge broker, creating a platform for researchers, students and teachers to meet each other and reflect. As described in Niegard, one of the major changes in the position of the library is the shift from “collections to connections” and “from transactions to relations”<sup>42</sup> or, in the words of Yakel, from “boundary marker” to “boundary spanner”.<sup>43</sup>

However, the library and archive can be seen to play a broker role in a very different vein as well. The library of today positions itself in a postmodern digital age, in which libraries are simultaneously described as superfluous, as essential places for refuge<sup>44</sup> or as the quintessential institutes of the knowledge society.<sup>45</sup> As

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<sup>37</sup> Marlene Manoff, “The Materiality of Digital Collections: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives,” *Libraries and the Academy* 6.3 (2006): 323.

<sup>38</sup> Helen Partridge, Julie Lee and Carrie Munro, “Becoming ‘Librarian 2.0’: The Skills, Knowledge and Attributes Required by Library and Information Science Professionals in a Web 2.0 World (and Beyond),” *Library Trends* 59.1-2 (2010): 315–335

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 316.

<sup>40</sup> Hellen Niegard, “Library Space and Digital Challenges,” *Library Trends* 60.1 (2011): 178.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth Yakel, “Thinking Inside and Outside the Boxes: Archival Reference Services at the Turn of the Century,” *Archivaria* 49 (2000): 143.

<sup>44</sup> Eileen de los Reyes, “Becoming Pockets of Hope: The Challenge to Academic Libraries in the 21st Century,” in *Crossing the Divide: Conference Proceedings ACRL Tenth National Conference*, ed. Hugh A. Thompson (USA: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2001), 23–9.

<sup>45</sup> Hellen Niegard, “Library Space and Digital Challenges,” *Library Trends* 60.1 (2011): 175.

Manoff formulates this set of contradictions: “We cling to our libraries and our artefacts even as we dream of ever more encompassing virtual collections.”<sup>46</sup> She locates the anxiety people express about the development of libraries in the fact that “libraries represent one of the last best hopes for maintaining the continuity of past, present, and future”.<sup>47</sup> IIAV/Aletta has attempted to express its relation to both past and future in its slogan ‘Sharing the past, creating the future’, which in 2012, after the merger with the organization E-Quality, has been adapted to ‘Sharing the past, debating the present, creating the future’. The IIAV/Aletta sees itself as an institution with a ‘Janus head’. One side is directed towards the past, the other side is looking towards the future. Its aim is to make the collections serve future generations of academics and other information seekers on the histories of gender issues.

## *Conclusion*

Throughout this article we have sought to challenge the conventional compartmentalized ‘knowledge chain’. Traditionally, libraries are understood as repositories of the knowledge that is produced by scholars and then transmitted to students who in their turn visit the library to get access to the accumulated wisdom. But in the current information era and with the advent of postmodern and post-structural feminism, the conceptualization of the library and archive as mere collector of knowledge is not tenable and should be replaced by the much more fluid position of knowledge broker and knowledge creator. This does not only involve the changing role of information specialists and new collection policies, for it also implies that students need to engage with the library in alternative ways based on an understanding that the library has become part of a complex web of exchanges that transcend the linearity of the traditional knowledge chain. This article has shown that the new paradigm of the library as knowledge broker and creator requires students and teachers to see the library as an active agent in creating knowledge rather than as a passive collector, and it suggests ways of engaging with the library as an institute constituting knowledge in its own right as well as being constituted by the knowledge/power nexus.

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<sup>46</sup> Marlene Manoff, “The Symbolic Meaning of Libraries in a Digital Age,” *Libraries and the Academy* 1.4 (2001): 379.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 380.

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## PARALLELS IN THE HISTORY OF WOMEN'S/GENDER STUDIES AND ITS SPECIAL LIBRARIES

*Karin Aleksander*

In this article I argue that a women's/gender library is not just a simple warehouse of books about gender studies, but rather a treasure trove of feminist knowledge, a laboratory of thoughts—and at the same time an archive of errors we have to address. I want to elaborate on how important developments or discussions in the short history of women's and gender studies played out in the praxis of women's or gender libraries (and archives) based on my experience as head librarian of the Gender Library at the Center for Transdisciplinary Gender Studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Hence, a gender library is invaluable not only as a place to borrow books or journals, but also to illustrate the history of gender studies and to support the development of research skills beyond basic searching techniques. In addition, I will share some possible ways to take full advantage of women's/gender libraries in women's/gender studies programs.

### *Women's/gender studies and women's/gender libraries*

Every student and every teacher knows libraries and, hopefully, they are all library users. Beyond traditional university or public libraries, they can use special women's or gender libraries. Individuals not lucky enough to have physical access to a women's or gender library can use online catalogues or databases. Thanks to remote access, the statement from a document of the Women Information Network Europe (WINE) probably holds true: "Behind every successful women's studies program there is a specialized women's library."<sup>1</sup> This statement answers questions that I have been engaging with for quite some time as the head of the Gender Library at HU: What is feminist knowledge derived from? Where it is preserved? How can we disseminate and develop it in the future? All these

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<sup>1</sup> Anna Maria Tagliavini, "Behind every successful Women's Studies Program there is a Specialized Women's Library: On intra-European cooperation of women's libraries and documentation centres," in *The Making of European Women's Studies*, Vol. VI, ed. Rosi Braidotti et al, (Utrecht: Utrecht University, 2002), 162.



questions deal with the intertwined nature of our subjects, persons, organizational structures, and history (herstory).

Libraries and librarians play an important role in answering these questions. But to participate in this dialogue they would have to step into the spotlight in a way that seems to make many uncomfortable. Many even remain quiet in professional associations and in literature in library science. In light of the intertwined nature of gender libraries and gender studies programs, it is furthermore important to ask to what extent gender studies professors and students see gender libraries as integral resources and active participants in the development of research in the field. In my experience this varies from high recognition to disinterest and/or a lack of knowledge. Due to the withdrawal of gender libraries from these theoretical debates, it is hard to find any articles on the parallels in the development of women's/gender studies and women's/gender libraries in traditional library catalogues or even in women's/gender libraries' databases. The development of databases on women's/gender libraries literature and related topics in the past fifteen years shows that:

1. The subject 'library' and the discipline 'library science' is missing from databases produced by feminist, women's or gender institutions. For example, the Feminist Theory Website by Kristin Switala lists "various fields within"<sup>2</sup> women's studies, but not library science; the same applies to the Women's Studies/Women's Issues Resource Site by Joan Korenman.<sup>3</sup>
2. Searching in general databases like the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC)<sup>4</sup> database on information, book and library science,<sup>5</sup> a query on "gender studies & library" yielded only seven results and a query on "women's studies & library" yielded just thirty-three. In both cases the results were not as recent as would be desirable. More current results

<sup>2</sup> Kristin Switala, "Feminist Theory Website", Center for Digital Discourse and Culture at Virginia Tech University, <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/feminism/enin.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Joan Korenman, "Women's Studies / Women's Issues Resource Site", Women's Studies at UMBC (Univ. of Maryland, Baltimore County), <http://userpages.umbc.edu/~korenman/wmst/links.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Online Computer Library Center, Inc. is a non-profit, membership, computer library service and research organization. Founded in 1967 as the Ohio College Library Center, OCLC and its member libraries cooperatively produce and maintain WorldCat, the largest online public access catalogue (OPAC) in the world, and many other services like the special database for library science used here. (See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Online\\_Computer\\_Library\\_Center#Online\\_database](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Online_Computer_Library_Center#Online_database))

<sup>5</sup> "OLC Informations-, Buch- und Bibliothekswesen", <http://gso.gbv.de/DB=2.45/SET=1/TTL=21/>.

could be found in the Library and Information Science Abstract database (LISA); however not specifically about the subject the role of libraries in women's/gender studies, but rather about gender-related issues in libraries.<sup>6</sup> This is how gender is most often categorized in library science - under subthemes like 'career development and satisfaction', 'education', 'employment issues', 'gender issues in librarianship', 'image of librarians', 'library history', 'salary and pay equity', and 'sexual discrimination'.<sup>7</sup>

3. Special women's and gender libraries collect books, articles and even graduate theses on women in library history or library education. They collect reports on the problems both women's/gender and traditional libraries face with collection evaluation and classification. These publications, however, are often not listed in general library and information science databases, which means you have to know where to look to find them: for example, in the catalogues of KVINNSAM in Gothenburg, KVINFO in Copenhagen, ARIADNE and STICHWORT in Vienna, GENDERBIBLIOTHEK in Berlin, ALETTA in Amsterdam, CID-FEMME in Luxembourg and others. The Umbrella Organization of Women's Archives, Libraries and Information Centers in the German-Speaking Countries—called i.d.a.—has been collecting a list of members' publications on women/gender in libraries and archives since the late 1990s, which will be updated next year together with the relaunch of the organization's homepage.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, although these resources exist, access to them is limited because many materials in these databases, along with their subject headings for searching, are in European languages other than English.

### *The library and librarianship in the classroom*

I hope to fill in some gaps in the literature on the theoretical and practical role of libraries in gender studies with observations from my experience at HU's Gender Library.<sup>9</sup> I have been running the Gender Library since April 1990. In

<sup>6</sup> "Library and Information Science Abstract" (LISA), <http://search.proquest.com/lisa>.

<sup>7</sup> Betsy Kruger and Catherine Larson, ed., "Table of Content," in *On Account of Sex: An Annotated Bibliography on the Status of Women in Librarianship, 1998-2002* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006)

<sup>8</sup> The current homepage shows the publication list until 2007. See: [http://www.ida-dachverband.de/de\\_angebote.htm](http://www.ida-dachverband.de/de_angebote.htm).

<sup>9</sup> "Gender Library at Humboldt University", <http://www.gender.hu-berlin.de/>.

October 1997, the first gender studies degree program in Germany was founded at Humboldt University. Since then I have become aware that debates in feminist/gender theory play a role in my library work. I would like to illustrate some of the parallel discussions and dilemmas of women's and gender libraries and women's and gender studies with a few examples, while keeping in mind that more research in this field is needed to paint a fuller picture. Throughout this article, suggestions for assignments will be provided to assist teachers and students in working with the identified themes. In the last decade there have been only a few publications on this theme for libraries.<sup>10</sup> In order to bring the women's library into the gender studies classroom, it is important to reflect on the feminization of librarianship and its status as a semi-professional or semi-academic field. Indeed, the relatively low status of librarianship can best be approached through a gender studies lens, while paying attention to the historical convergence of feminism, librarianship, and the development of gender studies as an academic discipline. Many German pioneers of women's centers and libraries, for instance, worked as feminist theorists or activists and librarians at the same time, though initially they were often not employed as professionals in the field of women's studies. This pattern can still be found today and can be broken down into different dimensions.

First, the 'internal' side, inside the women's center, should be considered. In the beginning all women worked without any hierarchy, since equality was the goal for all. This step is comparable with the situation in the 18th century when so-called 'professor-librarians' initiated the writing of the history of university libraries. Later on, when the job was divided into two parts—theoretical and library work—only the theoretical part was acknowledged as serious academic work. As long as these activities were done by the same person, that person (the professor-librarian) was recognized for both of them. Although both activities are truly academic in nature, hands-on library work was reduced to stereotypes like ordering, classifying, shelving or lending books. The hands-on work within

<sup>10</sup> Phyllis Holman Weisbard, "Using women's studies/feminist periodicals as a resource for researching Jewish women," *Judaica Librarianship* 10 (Apr 2000): 71–74.

Ellen Broidy, "Gender and the Politics of Information: Reflections on Bringing the Library into the Classroom," *Library Trends* 56 (2007) 2: 494–508. For archives, students from the Bremen's university history department together with actors of the Shakespeare Company have been conducting a project since 2007, in which they are combining historical science with dramaturgical work to disseminate archival resources. The project is named "Out from the files to onstage". See: <http://www.sprechende-akten.de/>.

the library was deemed administrative. This pattern could be a possible reason for the relatively low status of library work today.

Second, students and teachers should take a look at the 'external' side, outside of the center. Here the same pattern exists in the general academic world, as well as in the field of librarianship. Just as women's/gender studies is underestimated in academia, so women's libraries are not properly recognized in the library scene. Besides being a result of the division of theory and practice, or of academic and administrative work, this lack of recognition is also a question of power. Power belongs to knowledge and theory, and so this division is part of the roots of the invisibility of libraries.

Finally, "[w]ith institutionalization comes hierarchy".<sup>11</sup> Although feminists never wanted to work in hierarchical structures, in the end they indeed build hierarchies themselves. So the institutionalization of women's studies can be seen both as a success and as disenchantment. Themes like equal pay for equal work or feminization in special professional branches could be meaningfully analyzed using examples from library history, as well as from our contemporary period.

The process of professionalization has the danger of dividing different actors who all work on gender. New gender studies researchers are faced with the challenge of having to engage in the preservation and development of their inter- and transdisciplinary gender concepts, while still fighting for recognition within 'mainstream' academia. As they compete for recognition in the traditional disciplines, they could lose sight of other important allies, namely women's and gender studies libraries.<sup>12</sup> This is also a product of the individualization and professionalization that occurred during the institutionalization process. The specialized women's/gender library runs the risk of remaining merely a 'tool', an institution for students. At the high point of the institutionalization of gender studies in Germany in the late 1990s, only a few centers had their own library or planned to establish one. Gender studies programs either worked with a reference library situated in a common area or a professor's room at the center

<sup>11</sup> Gloria Bowles, "Afterword. Continuity and Change in Women's Studies," in *Women's Studies on its Own. A Next Wave Reader in Institutional Change*, ed. Robyn Wiegman (Durham ; London: Duke Univ. Press, 2002), 458.

<sup>12</sup> Caroline Nappo conducted an interesting survey in the United States: "I Still feel Like There is More I Could Do For Them": Collaboration Between Women's Studies Librarians and Women's Studies Programs." (unpublished paper. The Women & Gender studies Section (WGSS) of the Association of College & Research Libraries) <http://www.personal.psu.edu/jrg15/wss/ResearchAgendaArticles/cnappo.html>.

and often managed by students, or they placed the responsibility for obtaining gender studies resources on the departmental or university library.<sup>13</sup> The latter is of course a solution, because university libraries are in charge of serving the needs of all degree programs at the university, including the gender studies program.

### *The question of autonomy versus integration*

One way in which students could learn about their gender studies program and about the resources available at the gender library would be to examine the history of their program, library or archives in the context of a seminar. In this way participants can learn about historic trajectories of specific discussions, how the same theme appeared in the past, and how it is still relevant today.

Depending on the country in question, the second-wave women's movement started in the 1960s to 70s. In this article I examine German history, but similar phenomena can be observed in many Western European countries in this period. Modern women's libraries/archives were (re)established as one of the practical results of the second-wave women's movement in the former Federal Republic of Germany in the mid-1970s. At this time, early women's studies advocates debated the question of autonomy versus integration. In the former West Germany—and particularly in West Berlin—women's studies grassroots enthusiasts found themselves divided into two camps. On the one hand, one group of women wanted women's studies to remain autonomous. That is to say, they wanted to work within their own network and within the newly established women's studies center, which was equipped with a library and archive. On the other hand, another group of women wanted to establish a special women's studies center within existing university structures. In Berlin both of these two forms were realized: an autonomous Women's Research, Education and Information Center (FFBIZ, 1978)<sup>14</sup> with an archive and library

<sup>13</sup> Karin Aleksander. "Wie werden Gender Studies-Studierende mit der notwendigen Literatur versorgt?," in *Geschlechterstudien im deutschsprachigen Raum*, ed. Zentrum für transdisziplinäre Geschlechterstudien an der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (Berlin: Trafo Verlag, 2004), 136–138.

See also: Karin Aleksander: "Wer kümmert sich um die Literaturbedürfnisse der Geschlechterforschung: die Informationseinrichtungen der Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung und/oder die Universitätsbibliotheken?"

(paper presented at the satellite meeting of the IFLA Women's Issues, Public Libraries and Information Science Journals Sections at the IFLA Congress, Berlin, Germany, 31 July 2003). <http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/ebook/aw/2003/ifla/vortraege/iv/ifla69/papers/600-Aleksander.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Frauenforschungs-, -bildungs- und Informationszentrum, FFBIZ e.V., <http://www.ffbiz.de>.

as well as the Women's Studies Center at the Freie Universität Berlin (Zentraleinrichtung zur Förderung von Frauenstudien und Frauenforschung, 1981),<sup>15</sup> which also had its own library. Both centers still exist, but the status of their archives and libraries has changed. The autonomous center has been reduced to its archives and library. Moreover it will soon be affiliated with the archives of another political foundation. The center at the Free University saw its library integrated into the Department of Education and Psychology's library in 2004. It is important to note that both changes occurred when the head librarians went into retirement, which prompts the question of how we can maintain and preserve our own institutions. As the German women's movement activist Louise Otto-Peters put it in 1849: "The history of all times, and of today especially, teaches that [...] women will be forgotten if they forget to think about themselves."<sup>16</sup>

The choice between autonomy and integration had to be made by women's centers as well as by archives and libraries within and outside the university. Nevertheless there are also differences between centers and libraries in their decision about autonomy versus integration, and attention needs to be paid to differences in locality, organizational structure, funding opportunities, and staff.

### *Suggested assignments*

- Compare the organizational structure of two women's/gender studies centers that are affiliated with libraries. How did they develop over time? How does the structure influence the library work in general, acquisition policy, and decisions about location or cooperation with faculties and the university library?
- Analyze an independent women's/gender library that is not affiliated with a women's/gender studies program or center. How is it structured? How does it work to acquire the literature and material patrons need? Who are its patrons? Which acquisition policy statement does the library follow?

<sup>15</sup> Zentraleinrichtung zur Förderung von Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung an der Freien Universität Berlin, <http://www.zefg.fu-berlin.de/>.

<sup>16</sup> Louise Otto, "Programm," *Frauen-Zeitung*, No.1, 21.04.1849: 1.

## *Tracing histories: women's and gender studies programs and women's and gender libraries*

The vast majority of women's archives/libraries established in West Germany were parts of women's studies institutions. The oldest women's library affiliated with an academic seminar in women's studies is the *Frauenarchiv* at Dortmund University, founded in 1977. In 1980 the *Interdisziplinäres Zentrum für Frauenforschung* (IFF) was established at Bielefeld University. The *Zentraleinrichtung zur Förderung von Frauenstudien und Frauenforschung* at Freie Universität Berlin followed in 1981.<sup>17</sup>

These archives and libraries were sorely needed, because knowledge was needed. As was the case in other countries, in the 1960s and 1970s, many women's studies books came to Germany from abroad: from the United States, Great Britain and France. Many of them were imported by the same women who established the centers, because they had studied abroad or were deeply influenced by those countries' political movements in the 1960s. It is therefore interesting to search for the earliest publications in women's studies in special catalogues or databases to find out in which countries or libraries these original foreign publications were collected or even translated.

Only later did researchers and librarians realize that the more distant past was also a great source of information for early women's studies centers in West Germany. Women's libraries have in fact been around for centuries, even if they are often ignored in traditional histories of libraries. During the first wave of the women's movement in Germany, a women's society in Leipzig opened its library in 1866. Around 1909, about 490 of the over 4,200 regional members of the German Umbrella Organization of Women's Societies had their own libraries. In 1909, the oldest and still-existing women's library, Francesca Bonnemaison, was founded in Barcelona. The subsequent period saw the opening of the Fawcett Library (now the Women's Library) in London in 1926, the Marguerite Durand Library in Paris in 1931, the International Information Center and Archives for the Women's Movement (IIAV and now Atria, Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History) in Amsterdam in 1935, and the Arthur and Elizabeth Schles-

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<sup>17</sup> The lesbian archives and library "Spinnboden" was founded as an autonomous institution in 1973 as well as the mentioned FFBIZ in 1978.



inger Archive in Boston in 1945. In Germany, between 1933 and 1945, many organizations of the first-wave women's movement dissolved themselves, while others fell under the control or direction of the Nazi government. In Germany, rekindling an awareness of the women's movement and women's libraries after the political breakdown of the 1930s and 1940s took many years.

As is clear from the above, the history of gender studies programs and libraries is a valuable source for student assignments and offers opportunities to learn more about one special subject while gaining skills in interdisciplinary approaches to research. One example that combines archival research with library skills, as well as sociological and historical knowledge, is the following.

At the turn of the 20th century, several women's libraries affiliated with women's professional or political unions existed in Berlin. These libraries published their collections in a printed catalogue, as was usual at the time. Thanks to this catalogue, today we can reconstruct which books were on these (now defunct) libraries' shelves. First, students can compare printed catalogues of different women's libraries relating to their collections, users, and rules for the library. Second, students can evaluate the frequent claim made regarding traditional libraries' holdings of women's studies literature: "Women's studies literature—that is to say, feminist or women's movement literature—is not a part of traditional library resources; it is out of the view of acquisition librarians and therefore it is a gap on the shelves." In my own comparison of one of these 19<sup>th</sup>-century women's library collections with the collection of the Royal Library (later the Prussian State Library and today the Berlin State Library), I was surprised to discover that the vast majority of books were available through the catalogue of the Royal Library.<sup>18</sup>

### *Suggested assignments*

- What were the goals of the defunct women's libraries in their respective countries?
- Which rules existed for women who wanted to attend libraries?
- Why did national libraries acquire books about women's themes?

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<sup>18</sup> Karin Aleksander, "Sie werden hier nur sehr lückenhaftes Material finden: Welche Lücken füllen Frauenbibliotheken?" *Bibliotheksdienst* 45(2011)1: 52–63.



- Does the claim that women's collections are excluded from mainstream libraries hold true? Is this sentence true for any period in the history of libraries?
- Students can learn about the historic trajectory of special discussions, that is to say, have them conduct a discourse analysis by using different libraries.

### *Canon formation and canon criticism*

An examination of the development of women's libraries raises questions about the canonization of women's/gender studies literature. Who or what is promoting this process? Does canonization develop subconsciously or deliberately? Is it a sign of professionalization or institutionalization as a discipline?<sup>19</sup> In the Berlin context, there were great discussions among gender studies teachers who were working on compiling a list of recommended literature for the intermediate examination. The list was supposed to cover titles in different disciplines with gender studies aspects and could be seen as a canon. Because of fear of canonization, some teachers wanted to abandon the whole project. The students, however, wanted to have a core list of books and articles in preparation for their examination. In the end, a recommended list of literature was developed and the document can still be found in the gender library.<sup>20</sup> This document belongs to so-called 'grey material,' which is mostly out of the view of traditional libraries, but which is in fact a rich resource to look at when searching for information on processes such as the history of the development of women's studies or the shift from 'women's' to 'gender' studies.

### *Suggested assignments*

- Find lists of recommended literature in women's or gender studies programs and compare them.
- Identify the fifty or one hundred most included books in five catalogues from different women's/gender libraries. Could these books be seen as a

<sup>19</sup> An overview in: *"A Canon of Our Own?: Kanonkritik und Kanonbildung in den Gender studies"*, ed. Marlen Bidwell-Steiner and Karin S. Wozonig (Wien: StudienVerlag, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> About the discussion see: Zentrum für transdisziplinäre Geschlechterstudien an der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, ed., *Geschlechterstudien im deutschsprachigen Raum: Studiengänge, Erfahrungen, Herausforderungen* (Berlin: Trafo Verlag, 2004), 69–92.

canon of women's/gender literature? Compare the list with the collection of the national library.

- Interview librarians in women's/gender libraries about what they do to avoid canonization, if anything at all.
- Students can compile bibliographies about a special subject to document the development of ideas. Who published on the subject? Where, when and how did they do so?<sup>21</sup>

### *Androcentrism in indexation and classification*

In this article, the 'hidden' place of women's/gender libraries in the traditional system of libraries in general has been mentioned already. It could be said that there are still not enough gender libraries, in the sense that we have not yet reached the 'critical mass' needed to influence the traditional system to the desired extent (at least, not in Germany). University libraries are primarily responsible for supplying gender studies programs with literature and information resources. Owing to institutionalized androcentrism, this task has proved a challenge.

Hence, it is crucial to demand from traditional libraries gender-sensitive language in indexing, classification and authority control, as well as in the naming of documents, library associations and conferences. Indexing and classification are the most powerful instruments in the library system. With indexing and classification you can dictate which themes, which persons, and which institutions are visible or hidden in the library catalogue. If a special index word, subject heading or classification group does not exist, you cannot find the document by browsing in the catalogue, although it may exist in the library. That is why indexation and classification are among the primary challenges facing feminist librarianship. While there is a lot of literature about projects, steps, results and reversals in the effort to meet this challenge, the end of these struggles is not yet in sight.

It needs to be recognized that these sorts of projects are still met with resistance. In 2000, my own library met opposition when, after the gender studies center at Humboldt University finished a project that proposed changes to the

<sup>21</sup> A very good example about what is possible by analyzing bibliographies gives Susan E. Searing, "Biographical Reference Works for and about Women, from the Advent of the Women's Liberation Movement to the Present: An Exploratory Analysis," *Library Trends* 56 (2007) 2.

library classification system, the institution responsible for reviewing our proposal categorically rejected all of our suggested changes. This confirmed once again that a classification scheme is a normalizing force and a tool for organizing knowledge based on androcentrism. However, during the last decade, in keeping with the increase in gender publications in some disciplines, several subject librarians have begun adding a gender notation to their library classification, for example in philosophy, religion, linguistics, psychology and some other subjects—and these new classification schemes, in contrast to our own, were indeed accepted.

An important lesson from this process has been to cooperate not only with colleagues in the women's library network, but also with those in traditional libraries. In 2000, i.d.a. arranged to make its collection of women's journals available to the general public through the world's largest specialized database for serial titles (*Zentrale Zeitschriftendatenbank*, ZDB). To date, i.d.a. members have contributed over 5,000 inventory data sets covering over 2,000 women's and gender journals to this database. The project has been a success and a great step towards better promoting our institutions and increasing their visibility. In addition, since January 2011 "Women's, Lesbian and Gender Libraries" can be found at the Central Library Portal website under the Landscape of Libraries in Germany tab.<sup>22</sup> If you search for 'women's libraries and Germany' in any search engine, this portal comes up right after Wikipedia. So women's libraries can be said to have entered a little bit further into the 'mainstream'.

### *Suggested assignments*

- Students can develop special skills by writing abstracts including keywords and checking them in different library classification schemes.
- Students can compare and evaluate search results in disciplinary and women's/gender databases.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Karin Aleksander, "Frauenbibliotheken, Lesbenbibliotheken, Genderbibliotheken," Bibliotheksportal des Deutschen Bibliotheksverbandes, <http://www.bibliotheksportal.de/bibliotheken/bibliotheken-in-deutschland/bibliothekslandschaft/frauenbibliotheken.html>.

<sup>23</sup> See Brooke A. Bolton, "Women's Studies Collections: A Checklist Evaluation," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 35 (2009) 3.

## *Gender mainstreaming*

'Mainstream' is the keyword for gender mainstreaming and therefore another field of debate with regard to both gender studies and gender libraries. Following the debates about the subject of feminist theory and based on the changeover from women's to gender studies, in feminist libraries the term 'woman/women' was also discussed. Because all subject headings and index words are based on 'women', we eliminated the term from special keywords. That is to say, a search for 'work life' always yields results for 'women's work life'; likewise 'health' yields results for 'women's health'. This term was essential for the whole classification and subject headings system. My first attempt to change this system began with the increase of publications in men's and masculinity studies in the late 1990s. To solve the problem I initially categorized these publications into a special subgroup in the section 'femininity/masculinity'. Until recently it was the largest subgroup in this section and therefore I became more and more aware of the new problem, which in fact can be said to be an old problem in a new form, namely, women's/gender libraries deal with the term 'woman/women' in the same manner as librarians in the traditional classification schemes deal with the term 'man/men'. The use of the term 'women' is as general as the use of the term 'men'. The only, though important, difference is that the term 'man' functions as the basis of androcentrism. This one term, or better put, this one perspective, organizes the whole system and is therefore the basic reference point for all indexing and classification. While women's and gender libraries have criticized the traditional library classification for its blind spots, we risk doing the same thing in eliminating aspects of men—or more broadly and more importantly, of other human beings, who for example more readily identify as gay, lesbian, bi- or transsexual.

The blind spot concerning gender issues in the traditional library system is based on the equation of 'man' with 'human being'. Similarly, feminists had and still have to come to terms with this in every discipline. The existing knowledge in the arts and sciences is considered to be universal. This, in fact, is an illusion. Female specialists in many diverse disciplines have already answered the question, 'how masculine is science?' There are lots of publications about the hidden women in, and feminine aspects of, various fields. These publications often do not fit in the traditional male-constructed classification system. Elizabeth Minnich

described the amount of work which needed (and still needs) to be done writing: “What we [feminists] are doing is comparable to Copernicus shattering our geocentricity, Darwin shattering our species-centricity. We are shattering andro-centricity, and the change is as fundamental, as dangerous, as exciting.”<sup>24</sup> We cannot manage such a necessary Copernican shift if we relapse into the same patterns as the institution we seek to change, by taking the term ‘woman’ as our guiding star. This is not an easy task, or as Charlotte Bunch once noted, “[you] can’t just add women and stir.”<sup>25</sup> Around the same time, in 1994, Margaret Rogers noted the paradox of women’s studies when she wrote: “The paradox of women’s studies is that while feminists would like to see an end to discriminatory identification of women by gender rather than by more individual characteristics such as occupations or abilities, at the same time, women’s studies is concerned precisely with studying women as a group identified by gender. Thus, the collocation of materials on women is at once problematical ... and important to retain.”<sup>26</sup>

Recently, I checked the database GRéTA of the Gender Library at HU Berlin against two other comparable databases (all of which are even based on thesauri) to see how often they use the terms “man/woman/masculinity” as keywords and how they are reflected in the thesauri. I found that both the women’s library FrauenMediaTurm in Cologne and the women’s archives and library Stichwort in Vienna used the term ‘woman/women’ more than our Gender Library. Moreover they also based their thesauri on these terms. The Gender Library has the most hits with the terms ‘man/masculinity’. This result strengthens me in my resolve to change our shelf classification by deleting only-women’s based headlines step by step. By now, many subject groups are generally titled, for example, ‘Labor/Work Life’, ‘Politics’, ‘Body’, ‘Queer’ or given dual names, such as ‘Social Movements/Women’s Movements’, ‘Women’s Language/Men’s Language—Gender-Sensitive Language Use’.

Furthermore the Gender Library Catalogue highlights with special keywords if a theme, subject, process or attitude has a female/male, lesbian/gay or another special aspect. In this way, I have started to ‘generalize’ our classification

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Minnich, “Education for the Free Man?”, *Liberal Education* 68 (1982) 4: 311.

<sup>25</sup> Charlotte Bunch, *Passionate Politics: Essays 1968-1986; Feminist Theory in Action* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1986), 140.

<sup>26</sup> Margaret E. Rogers, “Are We on Equal Terms Yet?: Subject Headings Concerning Women in LCSH, 1975–1991,” *Library Resources & Technical Services* 37 (1993) 2: 191.

scheme, as well as our indexing, which is a break even with many women's libraries. I hope this method could be a suggestion for changing the traditional classification schemes and indexing in other libraries. Doing this, instead of constantly improving the thesauri, indexes and subject headings for our own specialized and limited collections, will prepare us even better for a future change in the general classification system.

And so here, once again, we come back to the problem of autonomy versus institution, albeit on another level. The more feminist knowledge gains access to the disciplines, the more it changes them and ultimately old systems of knowledge in general. And because this change is both disciplinary and inter- or transdisciplinary, in keeping with the general character of feminist knowledge, it has consequences not only for one discipline, but possibly for connected ones as well. When all these disciplines have been affected, have we then reached the end of women's/gender studies? And shall we preserve women's/gender libraries? Although it is not yet time to consider the general end of gender libraries, in special cases it is possible and the question needs to be considered.

## *Conclusion*

This article has sought to provide an understanding of how the history of women's/gender studies is reflected in the general work of a women's/gender library.<sup>27</sup> It has traced significant themes of women's and gender studies, namely autonomy/integration, histories, canon formation, division of labor, androcentrism and gender mainstreaming, and situated them in relation to parallel developments and dilemmas within women's and gender libraries. The examples and assignments presented in this article are an outcome of the work and teaching at the Gender Library of Humboldt University. In the Center for Transdisciplinary Gender Studies at HU Berlin we have had very positive experience with gender studies teachers over the years. The collaboration with the gender library was needed to empower both teachers and students as they seek to combine academic topics with library tools and skills. Gender studies students at HU have worked with the Gender Library to compile bibliographies on special subjects or

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<sup>27</sup> Some themes I have not been able to address here, for example, an in-depth analysis of special indexing of women's/gender literature or user information-seeking behavior and their special needs in women's/gender studies.

to write lexicon entries for a Gender Wiki. The work was then graded as papers with credit points, which is very important to give the project an official value. While this cooperation depended heavily on personal contact with the teachers to convince them about such a project and it was also a challenge and a very time consuming project for the librarian, especially in terms of teaching library skills, the results have been rewarding. Hopefully, this article inspires women's and gender studies teachers and students as well as women's and gender libraries to develop similar initiatives that promote an understanding of the relations and parallel histories between these academic institutions and libraries and archives.

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## INSTITUTIONALIZING ACTIVIST LEGACIES

*Silvia Radicioni and Virginia Virtù*

During the 1970s and 1980s in Bologna, Italy, feminist and LGBT libraries, archives and documentation centers were founded in an autonomous initiative of local political movements and activists. Accordingly, these organizations were conceived not just as information-based organizations, but also as expressions of a strong political, socio-cultural and symbolic stance. Being strongly linked to the political identity of these movements and directly managed by the activist groups that founded them, these libraries and archives aimed to disclose, produce and disseminate feminist and LGBT culture, knowledge and practices, all of which had not been accessible before. In the last three decades, these organizations have become institutionalized, mostly with a view to maintaining and increasing their activities. The process has not been without controversies and internal debates. Indeed, this institutional shift gave rise to several tensions. The organizations had to rethink their own political identity and agenda, their relation to civil society, institutions and movements, and their internal power/knowledge dynamics. Moreover, they turned from being informal groups of activists devoted to political action into being political information-based organizations with specific professional needs.

In this article we aim to provide a picture of this process of professionalization by analyzing two case studies, the Centro di Documentazione, ricerca e iniziativa delle Donne (Women's Documentation, Research and Initiative Center—CDD), which includes the Italian Women's Library and Archive, and the Centro di Documentazione “Il Cassero” (LGBT Documentation Center “Il Cassero”—CDC), Bologna. Through archival document analysis and interviews with Paola Zappaterra, director of the CDD, Annamaria Tagliavini, director of the Biblioteca delle Donne (Italian Women's Library), and Sara de Giovanni, director of the CDC, we will analyze why and how these organizations, as part of the respective social movements, have become institutionalized. We will outline the impact and tensions arising from this process and the specific trajectories taken by the two organizations.

## ***Feminist/LGBT movement organizations and institutionalization processes: a theoretical exploration***

By social movement organization we refer to a complex or formal organization that identifies its goals with those of a certain social movement or countermovement and attempts to implement these goals.<sup>1</sup> Institutionalization refers to the process through which social movement organizations develop stable ties with the government<sup>2</sup> or regular and routinized relationships with other organizations.<sup>3</sup> Whether feminist and LGBT organizations are social movement organizations is a contested issue. The literature on comparative studies of feminist organizations has grown during the last ten years. However, literature on LGBT organizations and the institutionalization process is still limited. In feminist organizations studies, some argue that, although feminist organizations were formed by the second wave feminist movement as alternatives to traditional bureaucratic human-service organizations, they have been transformed by the institutionalization process and evolved into bureaucratic structures themselves.<sup>4</sup> Others argue that the success of the women's movement has been the emergence of local feminist organizations<sup>5</sup> and that even the most institutionalized ones help to keep alive the women's movement.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, a movement organization is not a contradiction in terms, but it is, by definition, in a state of tension. It is always a compromise between the ideals and the realities of its daily practices.<sup>7</sup>

For feminist and LGBT documentation centers as movement organizations, the institutionalization process certainly generates tensions, such as the

<sup>1</sup> John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82.6 (1977): 1212–41.

<sup>2</sup> Patricia Martin, "Rethinking Feminist Organizations," *Gender and Society* 4.2 (1990): 182–206.

<sup>3</sup> Myra Ferree and Patricia Martin, "Doing the Work of the Movement: Feminist Organizations," in *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement*, ed. Myra Ferree and Patricia Martin (Temple University Press, 1995), 3–26.

<sup>4</sup> Diane Metzendorf, *The Evolution of Feminist Organizations: An Organizational Study* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, "Comparing the Feminist Movements of the United States and Western Europe: an Overview," in *The Women's Movements of the United States and Western Europe*, ed. Mary Fainsod Katzenstein and Carol M. Mueller (Temple University Press, 1987), 3–20.

<sup>6</sup> Patricia Martin, "Rethinking Feminist Organizations," *Gender and Society* 4.2 (1990): 182–206.

<sup>7</sup> Myra Ferree and Patricia Martin, "Doing the Work of the Movement: Feminist Organizations," in *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement*, ed. Myra Ferree and Patricia Martin (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 3–26.

relationships between organizations and the movement and the questioning of authority and societal value. For instance, how do feminist and LGBT organizations produce elites and claim resources and spaces for those who are not visible and do not recognize themselves in the dominant society?

Although feminist and LGBT libraries and archives experience similar tensions, the way in which these tensions emerge and are negotiated is specifically related to the social context, the history of social movements and, in our case, the nature of the library and archival space itself. Therefore, in the following sections we will employ an analytical framework to illustrate how these organizations have transformed over time in relation to the process of institutionalization. We will contextualize this framework by placing the organizational processes in their own historical contexts.

Patricia Martin develops a framework for comparative research on the variety and forms that social movement organizations, in particular feminist ones, embody.<sup>8</sup> The framework comprises ten dimensions, which are described in Table 1: Ideology, Values, Goals, Outcomes, Founding Circumstances, Structure, Practices, Members and Membership, Scope and Scale, External Relationships. We used the ten dimensions to guide our interviews and document analysis of the CDD and CDC, observing how the organizational narratives have changed over time, from their foundation to the present, and the tensions that emerged.

This framework, although specifically developed for feminist organizations, can also be extended to other kinds of organizations,<sup>9</sup> such as LGBT organizations. We will take into account the specificity of the feminist and LGBT movements in the historical, spatial and socio-cultural context of Bologna, Italy.

<i>Dimensions</i>	
Feminist Ideology	Does the organization officially endorse feminist beliefs associated with the women's movement? (e.g. liberal, radical, socialist, Marxist, lesbian, other)
Feminist Values	Does the organization emphasize the importance of mutual cooperation, relationships and empowerment? Is work conceptualized as a social, rather than technical, relationship?

<sup>8</sup> Patricia Martin, "Rethinking Feminist Organizations," *Gender and Society* 4.2 (1990): 182–206.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<i>Dimensions</i>	
Feminist Goals	Does the organization have an internal action agenda that helps members see women as an oppressed group and encourages women to change (politically, personally)? Does the organization have an external agenda aiming at improving women's status or opportunities in the society?
Feminist Outcomes	Are members transformed by participation in the organization (by changing them subjectively or materially)? Is society transformed?
Founding Circumstances	When was the organization founded? Can the founding date be associated with a certain stage or aspect of the women's movement?
Structure	What are the organization's normative internal arrangements? How is work divided up and integrated? How are the decisions made?
Practices	What activities do members perform in pursuit of internal and external goals? Are the practices consistent with feminist ideology, values and normative structural arrangements?
Members and Membership	What are the requirements for membership and the characteristics of members?
Scope and Scale	Is the organization local or national in scope? Is its orientation internal (members) or external (societal change)?
External Relations	How autonomous is the organization? Where does it obtain funding? To which external groups is it linked?

*Figure 1: Ten Dimensions of Feminist Organizations*

### ***Feminist and gay movements in Bologna: historical context***

The late 1970s in Bologna were marked by dramatic conflicts between the protest movements, the police and the institutions. In 1977, the leftist students' movement was subject to strong repression by the police, which ended with the military occupation of Bologna and the murder of the student Francesco Lorusso on 11 March 1977. A few days before, the police had cleared out the Goliardo, a building occupied by feminist movements. In interviews collected ten years later,<sup>10</sup> that moment was narrated as one of mourning and disillusionment, as a trauma but also as a new start. The feminist movements themselves were indeed

<sup>10</sup> The interviews were collected in 1990. For an overview of the history of feminist movements in Bologna and their relationships with the students' movement, see the oral history collection: Elda Guerra, "Soggettività individuale e storie di gruppi: una ricostruzione attraverso la memoria" in *Il Movimento delle Donne in Emilia Romagna. Alcune vicende tra storia e memoria*, edited by Centro di Documentazione delle Donne di Bologna, 53-108. *Unpublished*.

deeply divided when faced with the need to find new strategies and practices in their relations with the institutions. New cleavages arose between those who refused any form of dialogue with the institutions and those who tried to find other political solutions to the protests. In this context many centers, bookshops and new feminist groups within the unions appeared in Bologna and elsewhere in Italy.<sup>11</sup> In Bologna, the Orlando Association slowly emerged from an initiative of some feminists from various groups whose aim was to establish a body in cooperation with the municipality. At that time, the municipality, governed by the Italian Communist Party (PCI), was aiming to strengthen the nexus between institutions and movements by involving some movements in its efforts to overcome the fracture that had arisen at the time of the violence of 1977.

The movements of 1977, together with the strong political presence of the PCI in Bologna, are also the milieu in which the movement for homosexual liberation emerged. Opposing the history of invisibility and shame that surrounded homosexuality and that framed it as a special tolerated privilege of an elite (artists, the rich, etc.), the gay liberation movement asserted that homoerotic desire and homosexual love are accessible to everyone (workers, students, teachers, etc.) and could even destabilize hierarchical structures of power. Moreover, in its critique of patriarchal social structures and male identity, the gay movement felt strongly connected to the feminist movement. However, in this context, lesbian issues remained invisible, both within the gay and the feminist movements.

The debate concerning (homo)sexuality was already present and practiced within the 1977 movement. However, gay activists experienced strong tensions in identifying themselves both as *compagnos* (comrades) and as *omosessuali* (homosexuals), and some felt compelled to hide their perceived sexual identity. This generated fractures within the movement. While some gay activists explained their oppression in terms of class, others distanced themselves from the traditional working class movement and brought in new subjectivities. In this context, the *frocialista*<sup>12</sup> collective emerged in Bologna, appropriating practices of cross-dressing and performance as means of struggle and resistance. The collective obtained rooms as a meeting place, while most of the activities usually

<sup>11</sup> Among others, the Centro Virginia Woolf in Rome, the Casa delle Donne in Torino, the reviews DWF and Memoria, and the Libreria delle Donne in Milan.

<sup>12</sup> The Italian term *frocio* can be translated into English as *fag*. *Frocio* is a derogative term for “homosexual” reappropriated by the gay movement as a resistance practice to heteronormative language. *Frocialista* denotes the *fag* movement.

took place around the city or in alternative cultural spaces. However, at the end of the 1970s, like most of the other collectives at the time, the *frocialista* collective feared for its existence. In particular it perceived the absence of its own space and its dependence upon parties as the main threat to its continuity and action. In 1978 the collective was transformed into an association, the *Circolo culturale omosessuale XXVIII Giugno* (Homosexual Cultural Association XXVIII June). The change in name was highly significant because it marked the transition from a radical alternative phase to a more acceptable public and institutional appearance, which, according to its president, Valerio Cacciari, gave more strength to their claims,<sup>13</sup> recognition and the demand for a space. Although the creation of alternative gay culture was still at the center of their vision, priority was now given to the search for the presence of homosexuality in history and culture and to relations with other associations, institutions and the city in general.

### ***The Centro di Documentazione delle Donne and Biblioteca Italiana delle Donne***

The CDD was founded in 1983 through an agreement between the municipality of Bologna and the women's association Orlando. The main aim of both the Orlando Association and the CDD was to create an institutional women's space in which to produce and disseminate both women's and feminists' history, culture and heritage. Since 1983 CDD, which includes the Italian women's library and the archive, has been directly managed by the Orlando Association and supported by the municipality.<sup>14</sup> The Orlando Association was founded by a small group of feminists from various feminist groups, mainly with a Marxist and Communist ideology, and by women who, even if not active in feminist groups, identified themselves as feminists.

The Orlando Association's ideology affirmed the possibility to overcome women's historical and social oppression through the recognition and production of feminist and women's culture and heritage and, above all, the creation of

<sup>13</sup> Beppe Ramina, ed., "Ha più diritti Sodoma di Marx? Il Cassero 1977–1982," *Quaderni di critica omosessuale* 10 (1994): 17.

<sup>14</sup> The agreement with the municipality of Bologna includes financial support (determined every three years), the provision of a physical space and a certain number of employees, directly employed by the municipality. The CDD is funded on the basis of its multi-functional character as both cultural and social institution.



a political women's space. The internal agenda was to achieve women's empowerment and participation in society through access to feminist and women's culture and heritage, while the inclusion of women's culture and values into patriarchal society and its institutions (universities, governmental institutions, cataloguing and archival systems) were seen as goals for the external action agenda. The library space functioned as the ideal of a feminist community which collects, makes accessible, produces and shares feminist culture and political activism. Moreover, the value of feminist cooperation, empowerment and support was pursued by developing strong linkages with local and international<sup>15</sup> women's organizations. Forms of support and cooperation included sharing physical and virtual<sup>16</sup> spaces, training opportunities and offering financial help.



*Illustration 1 - 'Galliera'; picture of one of the first events at the CDD in the early 1980s*

However, since the very beginning the idea of an institutionalized women's library and archive has been contested by other feminist organizations and documenta-

<sup>15</sup> Among others, the CDD is a member of WINE, a European network of women's documentation centers, libraries and archives (<http://winenetworkeurope.wordpress.com/>) and has been an active member of Athena, the advanced thematic network of women's studies (<http://www.athena3.org/> now Atgender).

<sup>16</sup> A virtual space for women's organizations and their visibility was created with the Server Donne. The web portal hosts the online library catalogues and provides support for other women's organizations in Italy by hosting websites, mailing lists and events (<http://www.women.it/cms/>).



tion centers. In conflict with patriarchal institutions, these organizations claimed the autonomy of the (library) space, decision-making power over collections, work organization and activities to be crucial to the feminist political agenda and to the preservation of feminist culture. For its part, the Orlando Association asserted that institutional support for a women's organization contributed to the maintenance and development of a feminist space without calling into question its autonomy. For instance, the inclusion of the collections in the National Library System Catalogue was strongly debated<sup>17</sup> within the Italian Network Lilith.<sup>18</sup> If the CDD saw the National Library System Catalogue as a way to give access to collections and disseminate feminist heritage among institutional libraries, other centers regarded it as a potential threat to their autonomy with regard to the collections; they feared assimilation into a neutral system. Collaboration with academia was also an important issue within the network. While academia was seen as one of the most powerful patriarchal institutions by many feminist organizations, CDD's intent was—from the late 1990s—to influence academic institutions and higher education by cooperating with Bologna University.

Women's cultural re-appropriation and production was the major goal during the first decade. In the second decade major shifts occurred concerning goals, outcomes and structure. In the first decade, the CDD had been managed by the founders, mostly researchers in academia, the unions and political parties. A common generational socio-economic background and the shared feminist values facilitated decision-making processes, mutual cooperation and the division of work tasks. They participated in the CDD as members of the scientific committee, doing so as activists and on a voluntary basis.

From the second decade onwards, women's services like job counseling and training, in particular IT training to facilitate the use and production of new technologies among women, were created thanks to funding from the EU and national and local bodies. At the same time, new funding provided an opportunity to include younger generations of women as workers within the CDD and the library. The tension between 'activism' and 'professionalism' was indeed radicalized with the coming of the second generation of workers. While the first

<sup>17</sup> From an interview with Annamaria Tagliavini, director of the Italian Women's Library.

<sup>18</sup> The Lilith Network is the Italian network of women's and gender documentation centers, libraries and archives. Lilith was officially founded in 1986 during a feminist congress in Siena with the aim of creating a participated and shared feminist cataloguing system (<http://www.retelilith.it/>).

generation refused hierarchy and bureaucracy as intrinsically anti-feminist, the second one took a different position. The new generation of workers did not recognize themselves within the organization's practices and the informal structure conceived by the founders. Consequently, they questioned access to decision making, representation and power relations within the CDD.<sup>19</sup>

According to Paola Zappaterra, director of the CDD, this tension remains unresolved, in part due to the original agreement with the Municipality. The organization remains a sort of 'hybrid' organization managed by a feminist organization and supported by public bodies. The effects of institutionalization are tangible and she, as the director of the CDD, has often been in the position to have to decide whether to intervene publicly in the political sphere when such intervention might threaten certain institutional positions and thus jeopardize the continuation of institutional support. On the other hand, public support not only guarantees the existence of the organization but also enables it, as a particular feminist organization, to manage a huge amount of feminist knowledge and culture, to build women's networks locally, nationally and internationally and, more importantly, to keep influencing social institutions and society.

### ***Centro di Documentazione "Il Cassero"***

The CDC was founded in 1982 as part of the main activities of the association *Circolo culturale omosessuale XXVIII Giugno* and with the aim of promoting, preserving and making accessible critical tools on topics of sexuality, gender identity and social exclusion. These aims were in line with the main vision of the association: the creation of a cultural center for research and an alternative meeting space for homosexual people and those people committed to overcoming the marginalization of minoritized sexual subjects. The birth of the CDC coincided with and was made possible by the so-called *presa del Cassero*.<sup>20</sup> In 1982, the CDC, though criticized by other Italian gay activist groups that were contesting any kind of relationship with institutions and opposed by church and other civic organizations, but also supported by, among others, citizens and feminist activ-

<sup>19</sup> Interviews of both founders and the younger generation on feminist inter-generational legacies can be found in the book *"Cultura e storia delle donne tra passato e futuro. Teorie e culture politiche delle donne tra ambito locale e dimensione internazionale: il caso dell'Associazione Orlando. Interviste dossier Vol. 1."* Unpublished.

<sup>20</sup> The "storming" of the Cassero di Porta Saragozza, a public cultural heritage building.

ists, finally obtained from the municipality the management of the *Cassero di Porta Saragozza*.



*Illustration 2 - 'Saragozza'; shot of the CDC in its early times in 1991*

For the municipality the issue of homosexuality was adopted to demonstrate to the world that Bologna, the 'red city', was practicing a libertarian, European and radically reformist type of communism. For the *Circolo*, the space was seen as a community of affection where self-esteem, mutual support, cooperation and empowerment could be developed by gay people as they faced daily oppression. In this sense, the internal goal of the documentation center was to provide its members with the material recognition that gay histories and culture exist and are accessible. On the other hand, the *presa del Cassero*, described as "a love act towards the city",<sup>21</sup> was the occasion to show that the values of the movement did not merely concern a minority or a particular political position, but could be shared by everyone. Hence, the external goal of the documentation center was to overcome the history of silence on (homo)sexuality by not only producing a memory and an imagery but also pressuring public libraries to share texts with homosexual contents.

Between 1982 and 1985, the CDC was still just a closet with a few books and was functioning as a *biblioteca di circolo* (association library), managed by

<sup>21</sup> Beppe Ramina, ed., "Ha più diritti Sodoma di Marx? Il Cassero 1977-1982," *Quaderni di critica omosessuale* 10 (1994): 38.

a collaboration between the *Circolo* and the *National Arci Gay*.<sup>22</sup> It was self-financed, free and informally organized. Members could donate and borrow books, videos and other kinds of material without any specific rules. The opening hours (24 hours per week) were concentrated in the evenings to meet the needs of both members and volunteers. Already in 1984 the first request for funding was made to the regional government, and in 1985 a re-arrangement process was started, whereby the CDC identity was gradually transformed from an association library into a documentation center. Technical issues of cataloguing, acquisition, loans, preservation and material selection started to be considered and addressed.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, there was a realization that the archive needed to collect and preserve all kinds of material that were of no concern to other 'serious' libraries but were essential to the gay movement and gay culture (stickers, fliers of gay bars, postcards, badges, tapes, photographs, porn magazines, comics, t-shirts, etc.).

Since the first regional funding was obtained in 1987, the CDC has maintained a continuous cooperation with public institutions. Such cooperation brought a certain amount of organizational change, with the professionalization of personnel and a shift in focus from managerial informality to transparency, accountability and the planning/budgeting of activities. Since 2001, after the transfer to its present venue, the *Cassero di Via Don Minzoni*, the CDC has been a part of the SBN, the National Cataloguing System. It is open 48 hours per week, with opening hours concentrated during the day. Membership and loans are free of charge. The CDC is managed by the association *Arci Gay Cassero* and identifies itself as an LGBT documentation center. Whether the center should become an autonomous association has been debated since the 1990s, but formal autonomy has never been realized. This situation is a source of controversy. Since the *Arci Gay Cassero* is entitled to receive regional funding on the basis of its status as a multi-service center (documentation center, health counseling,

<sup>22</sup> The National Arci Gay is the first Italian national social non-profit association devoted to the promotion of LGBT rights. Like other social associations in Italy, it is part of the umbrella organization Arci. For an account of the development of the National Arci Gay and the gay movement, see Gianni Rossi Barilli, *Il Movimento Gay in Italia* (Bologna: Feltrinelli, 1999).

<sup>23</sup> One of the main problems was the (political) awareness that it was impossible to use the retrieval and cataloguing system of general libraries due to the specificity of the materials and needs (e.g. differentiation between 'homosexual', 'lesbian' and 'pederast'). The information regarding the process of re-arrangement has been recalled through the analysis of archival private documents written by activists at the time.

support, etc.), the different activities often end up competing with each other. Still, due to recent radical public funding cuts, the funding given to the CDC has decreased by more than 40 percent, while the capacity of the documentation center has doubled; in this situation its survival is guaranteed by the revenues of the *Arci Gay Cassero*, which stem from its club activities.

### *Suggested assignments*

- Select two women's/gender/feminist libraries and/or LGBTQ/gay/queer libraries and compare their histories of institutionalization (or the lack thereof). Which different phases can you distinguish? Can you identify a linear process or is it discontinuous? How do these histories relate to the social movement they are a product of?
- Apply Patricia Martin's framework for comparative research on the variety and forms of social movement organizations to a selection of libraries of your choice. What are the differences and similarities with regards to their membership, funding and structure? How do these characteristics relate to the historical, spatial and socio-cultural context of their location?

### *Conclusion*

This article constituted a first attempt to trace the institutionalization process of feminist and LGBT documentation centers by considering two case studies in Bologna, Italy: the CDD and CDC, which we regard as examples of social movement organizations. In both cases, the creation of a documentation center was seen as an integral strategy to implement political agendas. We have applied Patricia Martin's framework for comparative research on the variety and forms of social movement organizations, which includes dimensions such as founding circumstances, membership, external relations and ideology, to guide the interview and document analysis of the CDD and CDC.

We showed that institutionalization is not a singular phase that interrupts political action, but an ongoing process towards survival, continuation and socio-political recognition. Considering our case studies in the framework of Martin's ten dimensions, we see that several institutionalization phases have taken place. For instance, the creation of a formal association has been, for

both activist groups, the prerequisite for the establishment of a documentation center—subject to an agreement with the municipality and the provision of physical space and financial support. Furthermore, the shape that institutionalization takes is highly context-driven and reflects the interaction between social movements and institutions. In the context of Bologna in the 1970s and 1980s, there was a peculiar linkage between social movements and institutions. The PCI (Communist Party of Italy) in those years had a political interest in including some of the feminist and gay movements within the institutional contexts, while these movements considered institutionalization to be a means of survival and of continuing their work.

Nonetheless, as they were social movement organizations, in the institutionalization process these feminist and LGBT libraries and archives experienced tensions. Internally, the institutionalization affected the dynamics of inclusion/exclusion in organizational terms and in terms of knowledge availability. In the case of the CDD, the inclusion of younger generations of women raised new questions about feminist practices of elite production, knowledge and power gender relations for different generations. In the case of the CDC, the initial primary participation of gay males in the movement and the focus on discourses of homosexuality has been partly overcome; gender and sexual minoritized subjects are now included in the collections reflecting the necessity of an LGBT vision.

The institutionalization process has been criticized both by organization members and by external organizations, whereby the focus has been on the loss of autonomy and the absence of radical political and cultural action. On the other hand, institutionalization has meant more visibility and the creation of stable ties with other institutions and organizations. Hence, as we have shown here, feminist and LGBT libraries and archives can be studied as objects of knowledge themselves by analyzing whether they can be identified as social movement organizations, the historical context behind the institutionalization process and the tensions which this process generates.

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SECTION 2

# PRACTICES





## SEARCHING FOR WOMEN IN THE ARCHIVES: COLLECTING PRIVATE ARCHIVES OF WOMEN

*Svanhildur Bogadóttir*

When people are expecting guests for dinner, they check what they have in stock and then go to a store to buy what is still needed. A delicious meal requires high-quality ingredients. The better stores offer the customer a wide selection and label and arrange them in such a way that the customer can easily find them. The shop would not be popular if it was lacking an entire group of products, or if some products were only left standing unmarked in the storage room.

Though the service paradigms of a commercial space like a supermarket and a semi-public space like an archive are quite different, I will explore this parallel regarding historians and other scholars visiting the archives. After deciding on a topic and seeing which books and sources they already have, scholars visit the appropriate archives to look for more sources. The archives are to have a 'wholesome' collection that reflects their collection policy, and they should have their documents well registered and accessible. Archivists should work by international standards and should be neutral in all their work. If the collection lacks documents of a certain group, archivists address this imbalance.

The above would be the ideal situation, but does it reflect the experiences of scholars when they come to the archives for research in women's history, in gender studies or other subjects? What records can they expect to find about women, and how do they go about finding them?

The following article is based on my research on women and archives, in which I focus on the collection of personal archives of individuals in Iceland. However, the research can be seen in a wider context as the situation is similar in other countries.<sup>1</sup> I employ a multi-method or mixed-method approach, using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Triangulation is used

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<sup>1</sup> Questionnaires have also been sent to 60 archives abroad. So far 20 answers from 15 archives have been received, which can be compared with the Icelandic statistics to see if they are unique or similar to the situation in other countries.

to ensure that the results are valid and reliable. In addition to interviews<sup>2</sup> and observatory notes, other primary sources are collected, analyzed and used in the research. These include laws, regulations, catalogues, finding aids, polls and surveys done by Gallup International on record keeping in families and knowledge of archives. The accession catalogues show which private archives have been received, who delivered them and what materials were included in the collection. What we learn from these sources can be compared with the information gleaned from the interviews.

### *Women in public archives*

Iceland's National Archives and its twenty municipal archives have a role defined by law.<sup>3</sup> About 80-90 percent of their collection normally consists of public records from the local and state government, while 10-20 percent consists of records from societies, private companies and individuals.<sup>4</sup> About 10 percent of all records received at the archives consist of personal records of individuals. Public records are records delivered from the authorities of the state or the municipalities. Some other archives, including the Women's Archives and the Manuscript Division of the National Library of Iceland, also collect and preserve private records.<sup>5</sup>

It is not always obvious where to find information about women in the public records. A catalogue search with the term 'women' will render little to no results. Gerda Lerner traced the systematic exclusion of women from society's memory tools and institutions, including archives.<sup>6</sup> Some authors go as far

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<sup>2</sup> So far, thirteen interviews have been conducted for this research. The interviewees included the following: the municipal archivists of Kopavogur, Borgarnes, Akureyri, Vestmannaeyjar, Selfoss, Kopavogur, and Arborg, the former municipal archivist of Arborg, a head of department at the Municipal Archives of Reykjavik, the director of Women's Archives in Iceland, a section director at National Archives of Iceland, a female historian, a researcher in women's and gender studies, and a retired teacher of women's history.

<sup>3</sup> The author is employed by one of them, the Reykjavik Municipal Archives.

<sup>4</sup> Sometimes there is talk that collecting private archives is a burden to the public archives, and that they should concentrate on receiving the archives from institutions and public companies. According to interviews with archivists and accessioning records from the archives, private archives are often about 40 percent of the number of archives received during the year, but represent in volume terms 10 to 20 percent of the total, as they are usually much smaller. Therefore processing them and making them accessible should not be a burden to the archives.

<sup>5</sup> The Women's Archives mostly preserve documents from women's organizations, but also 34 archives of women, including some female politicians.

<sup>6</sup> Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 7.

as Joan Wallach Scott, who implies that women have been systematically left out of the official record.<sup>7</sup> Finding sources about women in public records requires envisioning where women were in contact with the public 'system'. Public records from older periods about the work of women in politics or in charity are often linked to welfare of children, the poor, the disabled, education, the elderly and marginalized groups. Accordingly, letters and petitions from women can only be found under headings related to issues women were fighting for, like clean water, compulsory education for all, hospitals or improved obstetrics services.

Individual case files, which often contain private information, are usually closed for a certain time period, depending on the country. For example, in Iceland they are closed to the public for 80 years.<sup>8</sup> However, case files older than 80 years are open to all and can offer interesting information about the lives of women and families, for example case files of poverty committees, social services and the police, and files about child support and custody. To find information about women, it is necessary to read the registries carefully and ask the archivists who know the collections well.

As mentioned before, the public archives in Iceland are also expected to preserve records from societies, private companies and individuals. This is part of the role defined in laws and regulations about preserving records concerning the history of the nation. However, it is not well defined what the history of a nation *is*, as can be seen in the third paragraph of Law No. 66/1985 on the National Archives of Iceland: "The function of the National Archives is to collect and keep records and other documentary material concerning the history of Iceland for the use of government agencies and individuals in order to ensure their interests and rights and for use in scientific research and scholarly studies."<sup>9</sup>

In laws or regulations about archives in Iceland, there is no definition of what it means to preserve national or local history. In many ways, archivists can be considered gatekeepers of archives, as they decide which collection policy their archives concentrate on and which private collections are admitted and selected for preservation. They also plan the promotion and dissemination of the mate-

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<sup>7</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, "The Problem of Invisibility," in *Retrieving Women's History. Changing Perceptions of the Role of Women in Politics and Society*, ed. S. Jay Kleinberg (Oxford: Berg Publishers Limited, 1988).

<sup>8</sup> In some countries, it is possible for scholars to apply to be granted access to research materials which are still closed to the public.

<sup>9</sup> "Law No. 66/1985," The National Archives Act, <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/6442>.

rial, which has a great effect on which groups in society are reached. Some of my interviews indicate that in some cases the archivists are the bottleneck, keeping more women's records from being included in the archives.

Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook describe how archives, as institutions, exercise “power over the administrative, legal, and fiscal accountability of governments, corporations, and individuals”<sup>10</sup> and how archives, as records, have “power over the shape and direction of historical scholarship, collective memory, and national identity, over how we know ourselves as individuals, groups, and societies.”<sup>11</sup> Archivists observe themselves as neutral, objective and impartial, but at the same time they hold “power over those very records central to memory and identity formation through active management of records before they come to archives, their appraisal and selection as archives.”<sup>12</sup> Riva Pollard quotes Mary Lynn McCree, stating that it is “the archivist’s primary responsibility to create a focused body of materials’ [...] When the archivist is deciding whose papers to solicit, [McCree] states: ‘it becomes a matter of deciding which public you would most like to appeal to or to serve,’ meaning either the scholarly world or the general public.”<sup>13</sup>

### *Whose history?*

As mentioned, the archives in Iceland are expected to preserve the history of the nation and to find ways to do so in a neutral way, including collections of documents from individuals. In Iceland, contrary to many other countries, there seems to be consensus about preserving archives of people of all classes. Yet, most contributing archives hold very few archives of women. Archives of children, immigrants and LGBT people are almost non-existent. The unequal ratio between archives of men and women is especially stunning, since Iceland’s dominant discourse of equality presents women as taking pride in their history, and as independent and strong. However, all the public archives—except one—receive

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<sup>10</sup> Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, “Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory,” *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Riva A. Pollard, “The Appraisal of Personal Papers: A Critical Literature Review,” *Archivaria* 52 (2001): 141.

far fewer archives of women.<sup>14</sup> For example, one of the larger archives received a combined total of 29 collections of women, 9 collections of couples and siblings and 139 collections of men between 2000 and 2009, as the following graph (Figure 2) shows.<sup>15</sup>

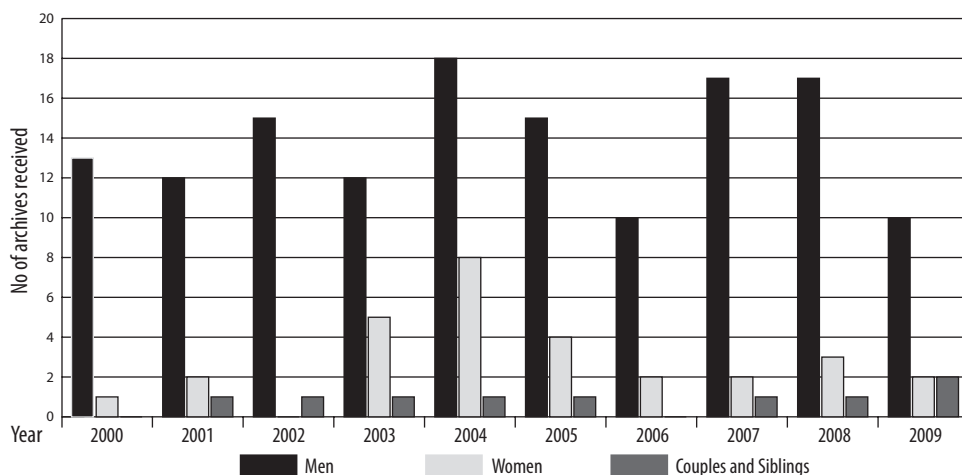


Figure 2 - Number of Private Collections Received per Year at one Large Archive in Iceland

The accessioning catalogues<sup>16</sup> of main archives in Iceland show that collections in the name of a woman<sup>17</sup> make up 10–20 percent, and in rare cases only 5 percent, of the total number of archives of individuals. Even considering that women's documents are sometimes under the name of the spouse, these numbers are worrying.

<sup>14</sup> The (female) archivist claiming the archive where she works holds just as many archives of men and women could not back it up with numbers.

<sup>15</sup> To count the number of collections from individuals can be a matter of interpretation. Sometimes a private archive had the name of a man but only contained documents of a woman; this I counted as an archive of a woman. Also many of the archives I had counted earlier as private collections from men, turned out to be archives of dentists, doctors, engineers and architects, and the collections were only related to their work. I took them out, as these archives were not private but professional. I also decided to have archives which bear the name of 'couples and siblings' as a special category and combine them in one group, as this is not very common.

<sup>16</sup> Accessioning catalogues normally indicate the name of the collection, the name of the depositor, what the collection includes and its size. Names of individuals for each year were counted by women, men and couples (wed or unwed).

<sup>17</sup> Collections of women can include diaries, letters, cards, handwritten cooking books, photographs, and accounts for the home.

In women's history classes at the University of Iceland in the 1980s, it was claimed that this difference reflected the fact that ordinary middle or lower class women in Iceland had not left behind many historical sources because of a lack of time (opportunity) and paper (education). In the 1980s, women were considered the forgotten part of the nation, of which there was almost no mention in the history books written by men. Indeed, private collections of men rarely mentioned the life, work, opinions or feelings of women. But this analysis does not explain why, even in the 20th century, women in Iceland—who were practically all literate and who are known to have been avid letter writers, often tasked with keeping in touch with distant relatives by mail—would not leave behind just as many or more documents as men.

In 1999, the Reykjavik Municipal Archives employed the Gallup International Company to do survey research, asking who in the family took care of the family documents. According to the survey, in 65.2 percent of the families women took on this task. Women keep diaries, write and receive letters to and from family members, take care of the family photos and often keep the finances under control.<sup>18</sup> So, women are the record keepers of the family and it is often they who decide which records to keep and which will be given to archives.<sup>19</sup> In fact, since women often have the responsibility to go through estates after a death in the family, about 60 percent of all archives of individuals are offered to the Reykjavik Municipal Archives by women. But they normally bring archives of their late husbands or fathers, and only rarely their own archives or those of their mothers. When women bring archives of late husbands or fathers to the archives, they sometimes explain the need to preserve the work they had been doing; registering weather for years, keeping diaries about their work or politics. Their collections often include diplomas or official documents to show what they have accomplished. The collection is maintained to keep their memory alive, it is sometimes explained.

Two of the interviewees describe that men find it more important to have their lives documented in archives than women. They feel themselves to be part

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<sup>18</sup> Some of the interviewees mentioned this might be changing now, with Internet banking, emailing and digital photos. They implied that men in the families tended to be responsible for backing up and preserving electronic documents. It would be interesting to see if this has changed since the survey was done in 1999 and to explore this further.

<sup>19</sup> Susan Tucker and Svanhildur Bogadóttir, "Gender, Memory, and History: In One Culture and Across Others," *Journal of Archival Organization* 6.4 (2008): 295–6.

of history and consider their documents to have value. Women are more modest and not confident enough about the importance of their documents. They want to be anonymous to anyone but their family, while men want their name to be remembered.<sup>20</sup> When questioned, women explain that they or their mothers had never done anything noteworthy, so they did not find their documents worth preserving. Moseley explains how the great woman stands behind the great man, with her thoughts and efforts often concealed in his accomplishments; she writes: "Women themselves have often considered their papers trivia and treated them accordingly."<sup>21</sup>

As a result, few archives of women enter public archives. They usually come when the women have died, and it is most common that distant (often male) relatives deliver their archives. As one archivist mentioned, the more complete archives brought in are those of single, childless, well-educated women. It seems that men are not as reticent to give up these documents, are not as attached to them, and want to do the 'right thing' and bring the documents to archives to be preserved when they are tasked with going through an estate.

In one of the interviews, it was mentioned that women are more private or sensitive than men. Their documents often include intimate or sensitive information about the family, as women are the guardians of family documents. Women's archives can reveal family secrets or information that was meant for their eyes only. One interviewee also mentioned that women tend to distrust authorities more than men.<sup>22</sup> They also tend to have less knowledge about how archives are used for research; they may worry that a scholar is after their family secrets.

Women do sometimes bring to the archives their own papers, papers of their mother, sisters or grandmothers. Often they have then gone through them carefully before and taken out all 'sensitive' matters. Archives of women tend to be smaller and sometimes contain mostly printed materials like bus schedules or information about social security, programs from concerts or theatres, birthday cards and Christmas cards. However, due to education about the importance of archives and how they are used, this can and has been changing. At the Reykjavik

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<sup>20</sup> This relates to older generations of women and men, which are the ones bringing documents to the archives.

<sup>21</sup> Eva Moseley, "Women in Archives: Documenting the History of Women in America," *American Archivist* 36.2 (1973): 215–6.

<sup>22</sup> She said that women do not trust the archives to restrict access to the documents for a certain number of years, but that men have more confidence in this regard.



Municipal Archives, every year an increasing number of women come with collections of value, with letters, diaries and photographs of their own or of other female relatives. Often the letters are very personal, containing small photographs or a strand of hair. They may be short and hurried, or contain detailed descriptions of people, clothing, food or an event. They write about every aspect of family life: love and divorces, birth and death, sickness, financial troubles, shortage of goods.<sup>23</sup> It is important to find ways to encourage women to come forward with their private papers to the archives. Part of doing that is to build trust by introducing them to the work of archives and how the papers are used. Another means is to bring the wealth of knowledge and information about everyday life, which can be found in diaries or letters of every woman, to their attention.

Documents of women are sometimes hidden under the name of a father or a husband and not even registered under the woman's name in the searching aid. There are many examples of collections of letters of a woman inside men's collections and registered in a single line as 'letters'. The reason seems to be that earlier archivists found them of less historical value or even difficult to index. Women's documents often contain information about society that is not preserved in official documents or in men's documents, such as descriptions of their feelings and beliefs, family life, political issues and events, community and customs, house-keeping and food preparation and women's work on farms and in factories.<sup>24</sup> In order to make women's archives accessible, it may be necessary to consider including new headings that represent the topics and issues present in women's documents.

### *Teaching the Archive*

The observations above regarding the multiple factors that play a role in the underrepresentation of women in the archive can be the point of departure for many interesting student exercises.

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<sup>23</sup> Letters of men tend to be more about work, politics, farming and the weather, but can sometimes be about sensitive matters like sickness, death and love.

<sup>24</sup> Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 16.

### *Suggested assignments*

- University teachers can ask students to look for their family's private archive: who is in charge of preserving it? How is it preserved? What are the criteria for preservation? How is it organized? What new/unexpected histories of (women's) family history can be discovered there? Does the keeper of the private papers realize their value? Students could subsequently be asked to write a small report on their findings.
- Students can also be asked to visit a local archive and try to reconstruct the story of an interesting, inspiring, non-famous (local) woman and write a small report: where did they find the materials, which obstacles did they encounter in their search? How were the materials preserved and how did they get included in the archive? What story can be reconstructed from the archival findings?
- For more advanced classes, it might be interesting to discuss the findings presented in this article in relation to a more general discussion about methodologies of women's history, particularly the practices of reading through/working with meaningful absences and silences.

### *Conclusion*

There is no single reason why so few archives of women have been preserved. More than one interviewee mentioned that women are less likely than men to come to the archives, so they know less about the archives, what sort of documents they want and if they can be trusted with family documents. However, the number of women visitors at the Reykjavik Municipal Archive is rising: currently, 28 percent of visitors are female, compared to 15 percent in 1997.<sup>25</sup>

Further study into the accessioning catalogues and finding aids of the Reykjavik Municipal archives shows that the Archives, like other archives in Iceland, preserve mostly the archives of white middle-aged men, especially from the first part of the 20th century, and particularly the archives of men with power such as officials, politicians, the wealthy or those who have had a certain status in society; the same men whose history is told in a typical history book.

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<sup>25</sup> According to the statistics kept by the archives.

Replies from 15 archival institutions abroad<sup>26</sup> suggest that both in their collection policies as well as in actual work they tend to preserve documents of people which in one way or another stood out in life, such as noblemen, politicians, scientists, national leaders, key figures in wars and struggles, and scholars. The 15 archives preserve very few archives of women and no archives of young people. None of them preserve archives of the public.<sup>27</sup> One of the reasons women are less present in current history books is that fewer sources relate to their lives and work. Women should thus be made aware that their private documents are of value and may facilitate the writing of women's history, and that scholars are trained to preserve the anonymity of sensitive materials. Archivists also need to make sure their collection reflects their society and find ways to reach underrepresented groups like women.

Actively collecting and preserving the archives of women is an important task. These sources will assist us in understanding the past and in rewriting history to include women. They will also facilitate research on the lives, thoughts and longings of women down the centuries.

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<sup>27</sup> It should be added that no archives in the United States or Asia replied to the questionnaire, but according to the collection policies on their websites they are also putting more emphasis on collecting the history of members of the public, including women. Lists of questions were sent to archives abroad in order to determine whether their situation was similar to the archives in Iceland.

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## CORE FEMINIST TEXTS IN EUROPE ONLINE: TEACHING WITH THE FRAGEN DATABASE

*Sara de Jong, Gé Meulmeester and Tilly Vriend*

From 2008 until 2011, European women's libraries and scholars have been cooperating in the FRAGEN project, which was part of the EC funded research project QUING. During this time FRAGEN compiled an analytical database of texts from the women's movements in the 27 EU countries as well as in Turkey and Croatia for comparative research into the history of feminist ideas in Europe. This article outlines how the FRAGEN database can be used in seminars to generate interesting discussions with students in two ways. Firstly, the database can be used as a useful teaching *resource*, because it provides easy digital access for students to some of the most significant feminist texts in Europe and allows for interesting comparative projects in classes with international students. Secondly, the database as well as the FRAGEN project itself can be used as an interesting *object of study* and can provide the basis for seminar discussions about the writing of European feminist history and its canon. This article includes concrete suggestions for classroom exercises as well as discussion questions.

### *The FRAGEN project*

This section offers a short overview of the FRAGEN project from the perspective of the people working at Atria, Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History (at the time called Aletta, Institute for Women's History in Amsterdam), which coordinated the FRAGEN project.<sup>1</sup> We will address the aims of the project, its partners, its development and the results so far: a website and database.

#### *Institutional context*

The FRAGEN project is a subproject of the European research project QUING (Quality in Gender + Equality Politics),<sup>2</sup> which compared gender equality

<sup>1</sup> Aletta, Institute for Women's History in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. [www.aletta.nu](http://www.aletta.nu). Tilly Vriend was the project manager of FRAGEN.

<sup>2</sup> QUING; Quality in Gender+ Equality Policies, SIXTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME, Priority 7 – Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge Based Society, 7.1.2 Gender and Citizenship in a Multicultural Context, 2005. <http://www.quing.eu/>.

policies across Europe. Professor Mieke Verloo was the scientific director of the QUING project. The aim of FRAGEN (the abbreviation comes from *Frames on Gender*) was to create a database of original texts on gender + equality frames which have emerged from second wave feminist movements in Europe<sup>3</sup> and to organize and facilitate open access for researchers to this database. From its conception, the project aimed to facilitate comparative research into the history of feminist ideas in different European countries.

Women and gender libraries and information centers have been collecting and indexing great collections on women's movements and feminisms for many years. Their databases show the varieties of feminisms and the rich cultural heritage of women in Europe and around the world. The Mapping the World database gives fine examples of these resources.<sup>4</sup> The FRAGEN project was unique in that simultaneously all over Europe core feminist texts were selected by experts, digitized and the full text made accessible in *one* database. The linguistic diversity of Europe, budgetary limitations and strict copyright laws were some of the major challenges in the course of the project. Also, throughout the project, there was an awareness that such a database could never be 'complete'. In the next section of the article we will elaborate on these aspects.

### *The partners*

Partners, who were willing and able to participate, had to be identified and contracted in all 29 countries. We found them among our colleagues abroad: women's or gender information centers and gender studies departments at universities in EU countries, and among members of the WINE network.<sup>5</sup>

### *Approach*

The partner institutions were asked to identify three to five experts<sup>6</sup> who had to select a maximum of ten core feminist texts which they considered to have influ-

<sup>3</sup> In general, the database starts from what is commonly called the 'second wave' of feminism in the late 1960s. Depending on the political situation in the different countries, the time period has been adjusted to local circumstances, as in many European countries feminist movements started much later than the sixties.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.aletta.nu/aletta/eng/collections/informatiecentra>

<sup>5</sup> WINE: Women's Information Network Europe. <http://winenetworkeurope.wordpress.com/>.

<sup>6</sup> These experts could be academics, but also feminist collectives, platforms or assemblies that were especially representative of the feminist movement in a given country. They should be knowledgeable about various strands of feminism.

enced the development of feminist ideas/women's movements in their country.<sup>7</sup> On the basis of the experts' suggestions, a long list was compiled, from which the experts were then asked to nominate texts for the shortlist that could comprise a maximum of ten texts per country. Experts were encouraged to select texts that were written as manifestos or that were bestowed the status of manifesto afterwards. The partner institutions were responsible for obtaining copyrights for online publication. Subsequently, they were asked to digitize the texts, upload them and code them within the database. We developed several manuals to guide the partners in the process and to streamline the project, such as a manual for the selection of texts, a database manual,<sup>8</sup> and a copyright and digitization manual,<sup>9</sup> and we also organized trainings. Further, we started a blog to facilitate easy communication and the exchange of experiences. It was also our task to develop the FRAGEN website and database, into which all partners were asked to code and upload their selected texts.



*Illustration 3 - Screenshot of the FRAGEN website*

<sup>7</sup> The names of the experts and their expertise can be found in the database, as well as the criteria for the selection of texts.

<sup>8</sup> Tilly Vriend, *Deliverable No. 102: Manual for the selection of texts and Database manual Fragen* (Amsterdam: QUING, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Tilly Vriend and Marieke Kramer, *Deliverable No. 103: Quality assurance guidelines within Fragen: Digitisation and copyright* (Amsterdam: QUING, 2009).



## *The FRAGEN database*

The database is accessible via the FRAGEN website (<http://www.fragen.nu>) and it is open to the research community. It was broadly conceived to include everyone from students to teachers and from academics to other interested parties. The contents of the database can be searched based on various criteria: country, subject, author and title. Its potential is strengthened by the fact that the database provides open access to the texts. In order to preserve the original content of these key texts, they were scanned and uploaded in their original language. The database provides a bibliographical description of each text (such as author, title, publisher etc.), as well as an analytical description based on the QUING methodology. This coding system or survey, which is in English to facilitate access for the users of the database, had to be filled out by the partners for all texts included in the database.

## *The survey*

In order to make the texts accessible to researchers who are unfamiliar with some of these languages, for each text an abstract in English describing its contents was added. In addition, a substantive set of codes offering detailed information about the historical and geographical context of the texts, their authors, their reception and a thematic and analytical framing of their contents, were provided. The 'analytical description' or coding of the text was based on a 20-question survey, in which partners were asked to identify the content of a text. The questions in the survey relate to topics of interest as established in Beijing's 12 critical areas of concern, as well as the use of gender in the text; the intersections of gender with other structural inequalities (such as ethnicity, religion and class); the causes for gender inequalities; the type of feminism occurring in the text; whether the text contains a call for action, the content of this call and who is addressed by this call; and the civil society/state interface. A final question in the survey relates to the framing of feminism in the text according to 13 different types of feminism (liberal, Marxist, socialist, postcolonial, radical, lesbian, psychoanalytic, standpoint, multiracial/multi-ethnic, social construction and third-wave feminism, as well as postmodern feminism and queer theory—one category—and feminist studies of men, based on Judith Lorber's book *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics*.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Judith Lorber, *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).



### *FRAGEN as a teaching resource*

The FRAGEN database of texts originating from European feminist movements offers many new opportunities for the dissemination of feminist ideas and for teaching gender across Europe. The mere fact that more than 250 texts from 29 countries are now available online, allows teachers and students to analyze the roots of feminisms and women's movements in Europe. The database offers a panorama of different types of second-wave feminisms, and allows students to compare themes that have triggered the women's movement, to analyze academic versus activist texts and to learn about their own feminist foremothers. Courses about the history of European feminisms can now require students to learn from each other's histories by reading one or more texts from other countries.

### *FRAGEN and canon formation*

The FRAGEN project prompts a number of questions regarding canons and canon formation that are suitable for seminar discussion, in particular with groups that include international students. Among feminists, questions concerning canons and canon formation tend to elicit skepticism or even frustration. Much of feminist activity has been aimed at revising the existing 'malestream' canons. However, to this day much of the canon, regardless of the discipline, is dominated by the work and perspectives of white heterosexual men. It is for this reason that canon formation should remain a central topic of feminist inquiry. Questions concerning canon formation touch on systems of exclusion and normalizing practices, and as such they touch the core of many of the central themes of feminist theories. In order to inspire teachers to open up this discussion, we have framed a number of issues that may be studied in exercises and class discussions:

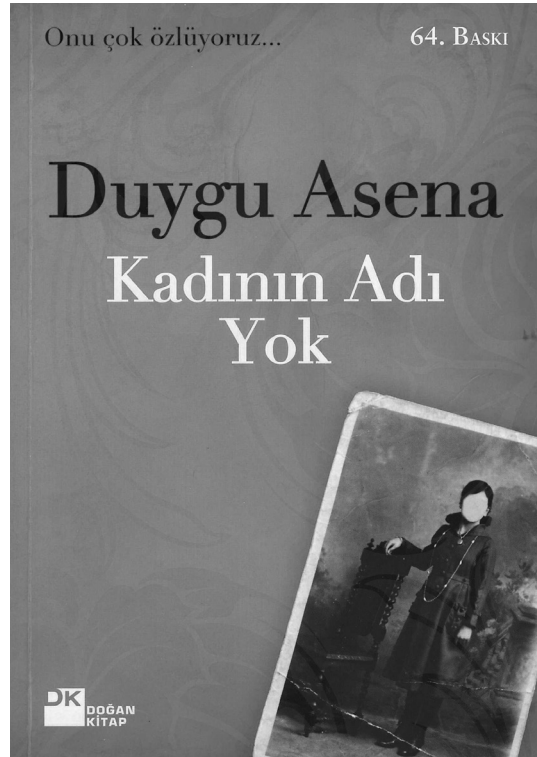
### *Suggested assignments*

- Even though the ambition of the FRAGEN project was certainly not to install a new European feminist canon, the selected texts and the process of selection can be studied in the light of questions about canon formation. Which national texts are presented as central to local and European feminism(s), and which underlying assumptions that framed the project can be recognized *a posteriori* through this selection? Teachers

can encourage their students to discuss whether the FRAGEN database succeeds in correcting existing (feminist) canons, or whether it merely encompasses a reinforcement of existing canons or other national databases? Through analyzing the selection criteria and procedures, students can engage with the question of what a feminist canon is or should be and ponder which texts students would expect to be included in the canon and why. Following this exercise, students can go back to the FRAGEN database to check whether the selected texts meet the requirements they have formulated.

- Another way to engage students in discussions on canon formation through the FRAGEN database, would be to look at the *types* of texts that are included in the database, which range from slogans to policy recommendations, from political manifestos to academic articles. Students could look at which texts were written by activists and which were authored by academics. Then they could consider the implications of the fact that many of the experts responsible for the selections are themselves academics that have been or still are activists. Students may also consider why manifestos represent a *genre* of feminist intellectual and political writing, and the manner in which manifestos perform feminisms in particular ways. How would the students define a manifesto, who decides which texts are granted the status of a manifesto, and how do manifestos fit into the general and feminist canons?

*Illustration 4 - Cover illustration of a book on the Turkish long list*



- Advanced students who are familiar with international feminist theories as well as with their country's feminist history, can be challenged to evaluate the selection of texts from their country of origin. Some project partners indicated during the project that they were unsure whether 'their texts' were worthy of inclusion in the database. How did these insecurities arise? Is the Western/Eastern European frame internalized in such a way that it may have influenced the selection of texts? Or were the selection criteria, one of which was that the texts had to have been produced during the second wave of feminism, biased towards particular regions in Europe? More generally, the database and its construction may give rise to discussions concerning selection criteria *per se* as systems of exclusion in themselves, and advanced students may be invited to reflect on how such 'excluding' practices may be subverted or corrected.
- Other points for seminar discussion could be whether a 'foreign' perspective on the kind of feminism produced in another country, corresponds with the actual selected texts. For example, is there a correspondence between what is considered as 'French Feminism' and the selected texts or not, and why would this convergence or divergence occur? What is the relation between these 'national feminisms' and transnational feminism?

### *The categorization of feminisms*

It has become increasingly common to refer to feminisms in the plural, to point out the heterogeneity of feminist theories and practices. As feminists know all too well, typologies and categories can both make visible and obscure ideas, perspectives and information. In the FRAGEN survey that the partner organizations filled out for each text, one of the questions pertained to the framing of feminism within the text, asking which type of feminism occurred in the document according to Judith Lorber's categorization of feminist strands.<sup>11</sup> For each of these options, the person interpreting the text could tick major, minor or not applicable, and there was no restriction concerning the number of feminist types deemed applicable.

This survey question (and the way it was answered) gives rise to interesting topics for discussion for both basic and advanced teaching about feminist theories.

<sup>11</sup> Judith Lorber, *Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

### *Suggested assignments*

- Undergraduate students who are new to feminist theories can be challenged to categorize texts according to Lorber's typologies and compare and contrast their own answers with the boxes ticked in the survey. Another avenue for stimulating critical thought could be to discuss with the students the fact that the survey allowed the interpreting partner organizations to select more than one type of feminism for each text. Is any combination of different feminisms possible or are there feminisms that are incompatible with one another? Lorber distinguishes between the 'gender reform feminisms' of the 1970s, which she associates with liberal, Marxist, socialist, postcolonial feminism, the 'gender resistance feminisms' of the 1980s (radical, lesbian, psychoanalytic, standpoint), and, finally, the 'gender rebellion feminisms' that arose in the 1990s (multiracial/multiethnic, feminist studies of men, social construction, postmodern and third wave). Students may be challenged to investigate and/or critique this categorization, for instance by being asked to present arguments for and against specific theses implicit in this categorization. For instance: can texts from the 1970s not be multiracial/multiethnic? And are standpoint and postmodern perspectives irreconcilable, or can students locate texts that seem to encompass characteristics of both perspectives?
- More advanced students may be challenged to reflect on the political and epistemic effects of the categorization of different types of texts. Such an exercise may involve questioning the relationship between readers and authors (who has the 'primary right' to categorize a text?) and the way in which categorization practices do or do not aptly represent the evolution of feminist knowledge across disciplines, institutions, and geographical locations. Who chooses and defines the categories and what implication does this have for texts written in countries 'at the margins' of Europe, such as in Eastern Europe and Turkey, where categories such as state feminism or religious feminism that are not included in Lorber's typology, could have been relevant?

Because FRAGEN does not only give access to the texts included in the database, but also to the processes of its own production, it offers a unique opportunity to

students of gender studies to engage with the question of how knowledges may ‘travel’ across disciplines, locations and perspectives.

### *Feminist methodology*

Feminist theory has sought to challenge ‘malestream’ research in terms of its methodology, methods and topics. The FRAGEN database offers interesting teaching material for courses on feminist methodologies, by providing a unique collection of feminist research findings that students may study for inspiration. For instance, the diversity of types of feminism present in the FRAGEN database illustrates to students the fact that research renders different results depending on the ontological and epistemological starting points of the researcher, which, in turn, limit the methodological choices available to the researcher—particularly in terms of conceptualization, bibliographical selection, the collection of data, and interpretation.

### *Suggested assignments*

- The database lends itself to comparative research on the feminist history of different countries, which may be followed by a student discussion about the methodological dilemmas that they faced in terms of collecting, selecting, and comparing texts from different geographical and historical locations.
- Both the contents of the FRAGEN database and the processes of its production may be used to generate discussions on feminist methodologies. Students may be asked to investigate the implications of analyzing ‘old texts’ on the basis of ‘new terms’. For instance: how would one go about reading intersectionality ‘into’ texts published prior to Kimberlé Crenshaw’s coining of the term in 1989,<sup>12</sup> but which were coded into the database under that category? What does it mean when elements of five different types of feminism were detected in a particular text, and does this text indeed inform potential approaches based on each of these categories? Teachers can discuss the advantages and limitations of the chosen selection

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<sup>12</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalising the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” in *The Black Feminist Reader*, ed. Joy James and T. Sharpley-Whiting (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 208–38.

process with their students, in order to get them to reflect on their own selective processes when setting up their own research projects.

- The FRAGEN website attempts to make the process of the production of the database visible by including information on motivations for the selection and the drafting of the long list. Teachers may ask students to be equally explicit about the steps they take in their own research processes, in order to prompt a deeper level of reflexivity. Such an exercise may serve to illustrate the challenges and complexities of producing 'situated knowledges'.
- To take the FRAGEN database itself, rather than the texts it contains, as an object of study may pose particular methodological challenges to more advanced students. As Manoff writes, cultural studies and postmodern theory have expanded the concept of 'text' to include, for example, databases.<sup>13</sup> This could inspire students to study not only the texts in the database but also the database itself *as* a text. Additionally, theorists, who are interested in the materiality of (digital) objects, have argued that the specificity of print versus electronic texts engage different ways of relating to texts.<sup>14</sup> Advanced students who wish to treat the FRAGEN database as an object of study will thus be challenged to engage with new methodologies that make such a project possible.

## Conclusion

Developed as part of an EU research project with the aim of providing researchers access to a wide selection of texts, FRAGEN also serves as a great teaching resource and a fascinating object of study for students. The FRAGEN database provides a concrete entry point for students to consider the mechanisms of canon formation, the intricacies of the categorization of feminist ideas, and feminist methodological dilemmas. Working with FRAGEN will help to prepare students to become the next generation of feminist authors. We are looking forward to a future in which their work can be included in an extended FRAGEN database.

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<sup>13</sup> Marlene Manoff, "The Materiality of Digital Collections: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives," *Libraries and the Academy* 6.3 (2006): 312.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

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## TEACHING GENDER-SENSITIVE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE THROUGH DATABASES: LOCAL PRACTICES AND BEYOND

*Véronique Perry*

Gender in language teaching is not simply a matter of structural linguistics, but of teaching languages and cultures without imposing a normative and ethnocentric (binary and asymmetric) view of gender while also finding pragmatic ways to trigger reflection in the language class. In other words, a researcher in language teaching and learning cannot be content with denouncing oppression and observing new peripheral language uses in activist groups (that is by people already convinced of the need to confront norms). Instead, the point is to find actual ways to have general learners be willing to adopt these new practices. Given the lack of tools and available knowledge about gender awareness in language education in France,<sup>1</sup> I will try to show through the analysis of my own experience that the guided exploration of the digital Web-based FRAGEN database can be a fruitful way to engage English language learners. In this way, the target language (English) is turned into a medium, and online resources (the FRAGEN website, other resources) are transformed into mediators. Even if the learners' task is to improve their proficiency in English, this proficiency should be articulated to gender awareness and to the co-construction, among learners, of a common history in class and beyond. This co-construction, the very process of finding knowledge, is facilitated through the exploration of databases like FRAGEN, which reveal the hidden history of feminisms in Europe.

### ***FRAGEN: its database as a new frontier***

In an article aiming to address the lack of text-based and audio-visual resources for research and teaching related to sex/gender and coeducation<sup>2</sup> within the context of second language learning and teaching, Rosa Maria Jimenez Catalan explains

<sup>1</sup> See *Aspects of gender in teaching English*, Véronique Perry, PhD dissertation presented on 15 October 2011 at the University of Toulouse III, France. Available online in PDF format: *Aspects du genre dans la didactique de l'anglais* (in French, summary in English) at <http://thesesups.ups-tlse.fr/1464/>.

<sup>2</sup> Coeducation in this context (Spain) refers to transversal topics that can be understood more generally as gender mainstreaming. Rosa Maria Jimenez Catalan, "Linking gender and second language education in a database," *CAUCE, Revista Internacional de Filología y su Didáctica* 28 (2005): 208.



“the main advantages of using a database for those dealing with gender issues within second language education. It allows students, teachers, and researchers to store, classify, retrieve, and bring the information on language learning and teaching up to date; it makes it possible to locate and relate a great amount of data on learning theories, teaching methodologies, and research on these themes; it facilitates the exchange of information among teachers and researchers; last but not least, databases usually store the information sources of the discipline.”<sup>3</sup>

### *The teaching situation*

I conducted a pilot project using the online FRAGEN database in a French university non-specialist English language classroom, with learners studying for a master’s degree during the academic year 2011-2012. The general aim of this course was proficiency in English applied to social sciences. The students came from different academic backgrounds and their interest in learning English varied. I was free to select the content I wanted to use with the students, as long as the activity encompassed tasks articulating linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences for the students to be able to understand documents in English (texts, podcasts, videos, etc.) related to their field of study or to societal issues in general. I had clearly stated to the students that I had been the delegate for the French partner organization in the FRAGEN project (2009-2011). The students were initially not aware of the contents of the database since its exploration was part of the teaching/learning process, but they already knew that my research interests in language teaching focused on gender in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching.

Indeed, the students and I had debated feminist thought many times as well as the use of gender-neutral English in oral and written practices. We had previously compared the English and the French system, analyzed the gap between France and other French-speaking countries, the gap between language reforms in English and in French and we had worked on a guideline to implement new usage. In addition, we had gone beyond formal language aspects; for example, some student groups had studied a video available on the Web called “Social Policy on LGBT2Q or Queer Homeless Youth in Canada”<sup>4</sup> and answered

<sup>3</sup> Rosa Maria Jimenez Catalan, “Linking gender and second language education in a database,” *CAUCE, Revista Internacional de Filología y su Didáctica* 28 (2005): 207.

<sup>4</sup> The video is on [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wPogV-8\\_TDY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wPogV-8_TDY) (last accessed on Thursday, 4 October 2012).

the question ‘Could you compare the situation in Canada and in France in terms of social policies towards the groups of youth described?’. Another group had written an essay based on “Dualism is just a construct”,<sup>5</sup> a review published in 2000 by Donna M. Dean about Will Roscoe’s book *Changing ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native America* (1998).

During the first semester and the beginning of the second semester, the courses had not always been ‘gender-centered’, and instead had articulated learning English in relation to environmental issues, civil rights, ideologies and social policies, among other themes, to fit the study fields and personal interests of the students. However, before starting the activity with FRAGEN, I had noticed that many students did not attend the classes regularly,<sup>6</sup> which jeopardized the class dynamics and the planning of the activities. Some of the students showed reluctance to ‘having to learn English again’ as many remedial students do when they realize they are “far from reaching the institutionally required level of English”<sup>7</sup> (level C1 in master courses, according to the *Common European Framework for the Teaching of Languages*).

One of the ways to circumvent this lack of motivation in foreign language acquisition is mediated learning because it changes the traditional role of the teacher as the bearer of knowledge. One of the characteristics of mediation theory is “transcendence (which) involves going beyond the immediate goal of the stimulus”<sup>8</sup> and is supposed to enhance motivation on the part of learners (non-specialist students) who are not particularly interested in learning a language or even do not display “positive behaviors”<sup>9</sup> towards the area of learning English. Consequently, the use of an online database could bring solutions to many of the difficulties exposed so far: the target language (English) is turned into a medium through the mediation of online resources (the FRAGEN website and other resources), the additional skill and thematic focus being gender awareness and critical knowledge about Web-sources. These sources have changed the time-space constraints, the accessibility to peripheral publications and the role of

<sup>5</sup> Donna M. Dean, “Dualism is just a construct,” review of *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native America* by Will Roscoe, October, 2000. <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=4588>.

<sup>6</sup> Some students have part-time or full-time jobs, and it was an optional course on Fridays afternoons. Some students could not attend due to external responsibilities.

<sup>7</sup> David Brown, “Mediated learning and foreign language acquisition,” *ASp* 35–36 (2002): 168.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

libraries in academic research.<sup>10</sup> The new teaching conditions were supposed to have an enticing effect on the learners.

The instructions to guide this in-class web search were limited to a framework of open questions asking the students to report on their own experience of the exploration process. The first two questions focused on the FRAGEN website, while the last two questions asked the students to search the Web for additional documents related to their field of study. Only five out of the fourteen students involved in the experiment were specializing or had specialized in gender studies.

The students received the following course outline:

***Outline of the course (6 weeks)***

The course will be built on the use and exploration of an online library (and their databases) and online documents which provide additional information. The assignment requires you and your co-worker to visit this website: <http://www.FRAGEN.nu/aletta/FRAGEN/>.

Then you are asked to answer the following questions:

- What are the aims of this website?
- What are its contents?
- How can you articulate a topic in your study field in relation to what you found on the website?
- What additional websites did you find while searching for more documents on your topic?

Final Exam:

- An oral presentation of your web search (with new questions from the other groups)
- A file of your work in digital format (including the questions and your answers), to be sent within two weeks after the oral presentation

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Zemsky and Gregory Wegner, "Changing Roles of Academic and Research Libraries," Roundtable on Technology and Change in Academic Libraries, ACRL, Chicago, 2-3 November 2006. [www.ala.org/acrl/issues/value/changingroles](http://www.ala.org/acrl/issues/value/changingroles).

### *The students' files*

The digital files handed in by the seven pairs of students are the basis for the coming analysis. The students' names were removed and their files labeled with A-G letters. All the student pairs received support in their English proficiency throughout the whole process thanks to a 'homemade' survival kit of 'language tools' (contrasting ideas, demanding explanation, giving advice, etc.; linking words, reported speech, passive voice, etc.) provided to each of them at the beginning of the year. Other issues were tackled with the help of class interactions with the teacher or among students and person-to-person weekly assessments of their analysis. However, some extracts quoted here were later edited or rephrased, which is indicated by square brackets.

### *The beginnings and the extent of the analysis*

The A pair of students (gender studies majors, now coded 'GS') started their introduction of the presentation rephrasing the instructions yet also insisting on the importance of the individual experience of the critical exploration. The D pair insisted on the interest of the approach/method in a language class, the interaction between the students and the benefit it brought to their field of study. Interestingly, another pair of students (B) first analyzed the website address itself. Even though they were guided through the understanding of the pun on FRAGEN, they were also interested in finding information on the website's domain name '.nu', showing an unexpected concern in the implicit passing on of meaning through acronyms: "FRAGEN is a portmanteau word as we discover it through the home page. It is a combination of two words: *FR*A*m*es on *GEN*der but it is also the word for 'ask' in German. [...] the name of this website is actually a multilingual pun: *FRAGEN.nu* means 'ask now'. [...] The coding system is adapted from the project *QUING* (note: the acronym *QUING* is another portmanteau word formed by the association of 'queen' and 'king')." Most of the other groups also commented on the pun about FRAGEN in their analyses since it initiated a collective discussion.

The involvement of the students was generally in accordance with their involvement in the general study of English. However, all of them actually commented on their experience and worked more with/on the English language thanks to the method of mediated learning. The students' critical analysis can be deduced not only from the exploration of the website but also from the questions the students were asked at the end of their oral presentation.

### *The exploration*

In some files, the comments go beyond mere description of the functioning of the database: they explain the actual steps they took to understand this functioning. Explorations of the survey and the copyright are in each file.

Students of pair D (GS) wondered who had chosen the pictures present in the database: “Where are they from? Are they representative pictures of feminism [in] the different countries?” In fact, these two students were deeply interested in the cross-learning process that the FRAGEN project implied for them as gender studies majors. English became a tool to have access to free sources of usually hidden knowledge, to the comparative European history of feminisms and to gender awareness. Indeed, they included all the questions that came to their minds about the amount of text available now and later in the database, the long and short lists, the experts and the French partner organization ANEF. They even gave advice to improve the website. I personally provided information to answer their questions about the lists, the experts and the French partner.

### *The experts*

The five students majoring in gender studies acknowledged the selection of the experts and some were clearly delighted to see that both the experts and the authors had written key texts they had studied. Students of pair D (GS) explained: “We first wondered who the experts were. By clicking on ‘France’ and ‘Experts’, we found out that the French experts who participated in the project are: Françoise Picq, Annik Houel, Jacqueline Martin and Michèle Ferrand. Such great researchers! Michèle Ferrand wrote about abortion which is one of our research topics. Jacqueline Martin was one of the founding members of our Master. Françoise Picq and Annik Houel are two authors we studied.”

Feeling familiar with experts/authors is a comforting mediation referred to as “the feeling of belonging”.<sup>11</sup> This added parameter may bring positive insight in the global learning process insofar as feminist thinkers, theorists and/or activists are hardly ever powerful/well-known enough as a homogenous group to constitute ‘a whole’ (unless it is to caricature them). Yet, in the world of language learning, the estrangement is displaced from being foreign to a language/culture to being connected to the same peripheral interest. Indeed, one of the students

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<sup>11</sup> David Brown, “Mediated learning and foreign language acquisition,” *ASp* 35–36 (2002): 172.

of pair G “wanted to take a closer look at the experts from Austria, as she came across some well-known feminist theorists in Austria during her studies. We saw that there [was] actually an expert from Austria who was one of her teachers at university.” The subsequent comment is quite significant of the added motivation triggered by the ‘feeling of belonging’: “Getting more interested in the texts and articles in the database, we decided to check out the Austrian and the French selection.”

Learners then constituted in a “community of practice”,<sup>12</sup> which is “an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavour”,<sup>13</sup> agreeing implicitly on common learning grounds. In our case, it is English as the international *lingua franca* and the fear/threat of its hegemony that is wiped out by the necessity to have a common access to a (feminist) gold mine.

### *The documents: the translation of the original texts*

For the FRAGEN partners, the third criterion for the selection of the original texts was the location. This criterion was formulated thus: “the first focus should be on texts that originated in each country, but ‘imported’ and translated texts are not completely excluded”.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, even if some documents were written in or translated into English, the problem of understanding the original language was a hotly debated topic in all files. The fact that in most cases information about non-English texts was limited to a summary in English was resented by and frustrating to all the students.

One of the students of pair A (GS) insisted on the cross-cultural value of the content and the value of the international involvement of so many countries. Students of pair B understood the choice of English for the same reason: “The choice of English is obviously a compromise on an international website as FRAGEN.” Students of pair D (GS) answered to the question “How did you select the different countries investigated?”, a question asked after the oral presentation by their peers, that language had been a decisive aspect in their selection of texts. Students of group E simply wrote: “The summary helps us to get the

<sup>12</sup> Penny Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet, “Communities of Practice: Where Gender, Language and Power All Live,” in *Language and Gender, A Reader*, ed. Jennifer Coates (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1998), 490.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> See: [http://www.fragen.nu/aletta/fragen/about\\_fragen/selection\\_process](http://www.fragen.nu/aletta/fragen/about_fragen/selection_process).

content of the document but it's not enough. We think FRAGEN should translate the texts in English." To the question "If you ha[d] the possibility to change something on the website, what would it be?", which was asked after the presentation, students of pair F merely answered: "We would like to have a translation of all the texts in order to have easy access to them." Students of pair G showed a positive yearning for additional accessible content in the database.

*Students in gender studies interested in intersections between gender, race and sexuality*

As seen previously with pair D in relation to the experts chosen for the selection of the texts for the database, all students in gender studies found the experiment stimulating for their own perspectives. Having 'hidden knowledge' now open to the World Wide Web helps legitimize the field of feminist theory. The work of pair E (one in GS) is noteworthy in this matter, being devoted to black feminism in the second part of the file. The accumulation of long quotations is significant of the greed for knowledge one may feel when exploring a concept or a conceptual paradigm that is key to one's personal fulfillment. They really stressed the lack of knowledge in their own country France:

First we choose to work on "black feminism" because we both have in our master courses about gender studies but [only a] few [hints] about black feminism. (...) before [exploring] the website we [had not] read many things about it. (...) It was the first time we made researches about black feminism. (...) since we have started studying sociology we were interested [in] gender studies we didn't have a lot of courses about it we don't know why. Well when we were surfing on FRAGEN we tried to find something about it in France but there was nothing. We saw that "black feminism" is very developed in Britain, we hope it will come in France soon.

The five students in gender studies emphasized the lack of sources about a given topic related to feminism in France or the lack of articulation of gender within a given academic field. One of the students of pair A explained how gender was key to her research: "I am interested in women's appropriation of public spaces, [so] next year I would like to view the urban question [from] the angle of gender studies." The other student of pair A insisted on the invisibility of lesbians and



lesbian studies, this invisibility being enhanced by the language barrier, even after the texts were found on the database.

The positive attitude of the two pair D students and their involvement encouraged me to challenge them with additional questions, indirectly dealing with epistemological issues in the field of women's/feminist/gender/queer studies. Their answers back up the remarks of their peers (as reported above):

- Is the final selection of texts for France faithful to our own ideas of feminism?

It is important for us to see that this selection represents our idea of feminism. It is a good thing to see this presentation of feminism in France introduced to European and World Wide Web users. It seems important for us that this idea of feminism was presented, all the more so since the so-called "French feminism" is often wrongly considered as *the* feminism in France. The selected texts tackle the first struggles on which the feminist movements of the 70's [were] built: abortion, rape, housework, women's work. We only regret the missing (in the short list) of some important theorists, according to us, like Paola Tabet (present in the long list) or Monique Wittig who raised the political aspect of lesbianism.

- What do we think of the selection of other countries considering the authors we have studied?

To answer to this question, we went through the United Kingdom selection. We thought we should know some of them [which was not the case]. (...) [In fact,] some authors can be known abroad but not considered as obviously representative of feminism in their own countries. [We are now aware] that we can have a specific idea of feminism in some countries because of the authors published in our own country even if it is not faithful to the feminism recognized there.

### *Their conclusions*

The students' conclusions about their experiences are as varied as their involvement. Yet, there is now a difference between students majoring in gender studies and the others, except for students of pair C whose conclusive remarks encompass the multiple learning goals of the experiment.



For the students of pair G, the experience did not challenge their views on sex 'difference'. Indeed, for them the "concept [of eco-feminism] is interesting. Considering the differences between men and women through the idea that biologically the two sexes are different, gives a new perspective to the environmental discussion." Students of pair E said they could use the database. Students of pair B seem to regret that the articulation with their study field is not obvious, hinting they might later consider conducting further research in feminist theory.

The students of pair A (GS), who will also use the website for their future research, insisted on the importance of such a database today but asked again for translations into English. As seen previously, although students of pair D (GS) insisted on the urge to translate the original documents, their attitude, positive remarks and general involvement made it obvious that studying English through the exploration of a feminist database was a turning point for them as learners. It was the same for the students of pair E, the one involved in gender studies and the other in diversity issues/public policies, whose final sentence was a request for black feminism to spread through France.

Students of pair C (master in business management: see annex 2) congratulated the FRAGEN coordinating team at Aletta, Institute for Women's History in the Netherlands<sup>15</sup> and consider this experience as an asset in their curriculum, insisting both on the doors to knowledge and work opened by the English language and by gender, even if the concept still needs to be clarified: "Overall, we were surprised by the impressive work which was carried out by the FRAGEN team. (...) We were a little disappointed because, in our opinion, there was no definition of 'gender'. (...) Generally, we were happy to discover this website and to know a little more about feminism in Europe. We will admit that knowledge of English is very important for our future work and it would allow us to participate in this type of international research. Also, speaking an international language is an important selection criterion for obtaining a job."

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<sup>15</sup> Since January 2013, after the merger of Aletta, Institute for Women's History with E-Quality, Information Centre for Gender, Family and Diversity Issues, the institute has been known as Atria, Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History.

## Conclusion

None of the files were written using pseudo-generic masculine forms/items, which is in itself an achievement. Some students totally ignored the purpose of the process (pair G) and others skipped some requirements (questions missing, analyses partly overlooked for pairs A and E). However, the use of an online database providing free access to core feminist texts in Europe challenges both traditional methods of teaching EFL and gender-blind teaching resources. In addition, the mediation of learning (through punctual computer-based teaching, transcendence and the feeling of belonging) turns the ethical problem of the hegemony of English into the urgent need for a *lingua franca* for primary sources to be available. Knowing that 'the matter is at hand' beyond national borders, learners truly interested in feminist thinking and gender are no longer willing to cope with the frustrations of the distant observer deprived of knowledge because of language barriers. The FRAGEN experiment can indeed become a teaching/learning experience and the general demand is clearly for the number of documents in the database to be increased and for the documents to be available in English translation. The pilot project of teaching EFL through FRAGEN (and other databases) will now be extended to include non-specialist students graduating in other branches of science.

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## (RE)SEARCHING GENDER IN A LIBRARY

*Fabiënne Baider and Anna Zobnina*

*with the participation of Despina Lambrou<sup>1</sup>*

### *Information and the structure of knowledge*

To organize information, librarians create structures. These structures grow from a logic that goes back at least as far as Aristotle. It is the basis of classification as we practice it, and thesauri and subject headings have developed from it. Feminist critiques of logic suggest that logic is gendered in nature.<sup>2</sup>

This article explores how feminist critiques of logic play out in contemporary standards of the organization of information, in particular at the University of Cyprus Library (UCYL), which uses the Library of Congress subject headings and classification. Ever since the 1970s, research on librarian classifications of concepts and resources regarding ‘gender’, ‘women’, ‘sexualities’, ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ has critiqued their unsubstantiated ontological value.<sup>3</sup> The concept of ‘gendered knowledge’ in librarian classification and knowledge organization has led to an overall critique of how, as Searing argues, “within the walls of the library the classification system functions as *hegemonic representation of human knowledge*” (our italics).<sup>4</sup> She argues that what is considered marginal by the mainstream discourse will also be marginalized in libraries.

Since these earlier works, much progress has been made<sup>5</sup> thanks to the pressure of feminist demands, as well as the ever-growing role of internet and social networks in research and information. How did these transformations

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<sup>2</sup> Hope A. Olson, “How We Construct Subjects: a Feminist Analysis,” *Library Trends* 56.2 (2007): 509.

<sup>3</sup> Suzan E. Searing, “How Libraries Cope with Interdisciplinarity: The Case of Women’s Studies,” *Issues in Integrative Studies* 10 (1992); A.C. Fokkett, “Misogynists All: A Study in Critical Classification,” *Library Resources & Technical Services* 15 (1971); Sanford Berman, *Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Heads Concerning People* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1971); J. K. Marshall, *On Equal Terms: A Thesaurus for Nonsexist Indexing and Cataloging* (New York: Neal-Schuman, 1977).

<sup>4</sup> Suzan E. Searing, “How Libraries Cope with Interdisciplinarity: The Case of Women’s Studies,” *Issues in Integrative Studies* 10 (1992): 7.

<sup>5</sup> Hope A. Olson, *The power to name: Locating the limits of subject representation in libraries* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic, 2002); ---, “How We Construct Subjects: a Feminist Analysis,” *Library Trends* 56.2 (2007).

affect research on topics such as gender, feminism and queer studies? What happens when searching and researching these fields in a relatively *new* university library<sup>6</sup> in a *small ex-centered* country such as Cyprus? Our aim in this article is to answer these questions at both a pragmatic and theoretical level. Firstly, we will anchor our work in feminist research on library classifications.<sup>7</sup> After contextualizing the University of Cyprus (UCY) in its historical and institutional relationship with gender studies, we present a hands-on study via interviews and questionnaires involving library staff, academics and students involved in gender studies, to examine whether or not the knowledge/power nexus is embedded in classification practices. Finally, the article suggests some solutions for filling the gaps in knowledge identified through our interviews, questionnaires, research and teaching.

### *Organizing knowledge, creating prejudice*

In this section we will explore libraries' function of categorizing knowledge through the ways they catalogue, classify, develop the collection and preserve (or the opposite) the existing collection.<sup>8</sup>

#### *The nature and function of a library: celebrating a hegemonic discourse?*

Libraries can be considered numerical or spatial systems. Two main systems are used for library classification in order to "structure knowledge organization and [offer a] mechanism of information retrieval":<sup>9</sup> the Dewey Decimal System (DD) and the Library of Congress system (LoC), both "designed as the hierarchical and universal profiles of human knowledge".<sup>10</sup> The authority of the Library of Congress (e.g. the widespread use of their subject headings as an official and foundational vocabulary) and the fact the UCYL uses that system explains why we will be solely focusing on that system.

<sup>6</sup> The university was founded by law in 1989 and the library was established in 1990–1991.

<sup>7</sup> Hope A. Olson, "How We Construct Subjects: a Feminist Analysis," *Library Trends* 56.2 (2007): 509–41.

<sup>8</sup> Suzan E. Searing, "How Libraries Cope with Interdisciplinarity: The Case of Women's Studies," *Issues in Integrative Studies* 10 (1992): 7.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 8.

Any classification is the product of prejudices, since it is the result of the beliefs and experiences of the group doing the cataloguing. As Bhabha reminds us, “It is within the process of *differentiation* that dominance in the name of *cultural supremacy* can be achieved”<sup>11</sup> (our italics). It is then not surprising that LofC has been accused of embodying ideology, imposing a certain world view, and privileging certain values through exclusions, marginalization and distortions. However, in the case of library classification, these mechanisms result in shaping the body of knowledge available to the users. In order to function in a library, users have to adopt a previously decided (for them and without them) system of differentiation that constructs categories, and follow the point of view of these codifiers.<sup>12</sup>

The phenomenon of cultural erasure has also affected knowledge coming from outside the dominant culture that has produced most books, built most libraries and imagined most classification processes within a given cultural context. Following Yen-Ran Yeh’s footsteps in denouncing the ethnocentricity of LofC classifications and structures, Fixico criticizes the hierarchical structure used to organize data adopted by LofC that marginalizes Indian thinking and ‘seeing’ things in terms of circles and cycles.<sup>13</sup> He argues that this imposition of hierarchical categorization is reminiscent of how Western travelers, anthropologists, etc. ‘defined’ the ‘natives’ in line with Western needs, assumptions and prejudices. Numerous studies<sup>14</sup> have also revealed how—voluntarily or otherwise—such prejudices as sexism, racism or homophobia are reflected in the classification of knowledge. These biases may in turn influence the perception of users, since they have to internalize such systems of classification in order to be

<sup>11</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 36.

<sup>12</sup> Hope A. Olson, *The power to name: Locating the limits of subject representation in libraries* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2002); D. J. Foskett, *Pathways for Communication* (London: Clive Bingley, 1984).

<sup>13</sup> Donald Fixico, *Mind in a Linear World: American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 1. Along the same line of thought, but closer to home, LofC classifies Cyprus in Asia and not in Europe and uses the subject heading “*Turkish republic of northern Cyprus, 1983-*” to describe the northern part of the Republic of Cyprus under Turkish rule. LofC adopts, therefore, the internationally *rejected* version of the political status on the island of Cyprus (attributing the northern region a state status when the United Nations does not). The Dewey classification went even further and used to classify Cyprus as a ‘Turkish province’ before complaints brought forward by UCYL.

<sup>14</sup> See the first studies in the field: Sanford Berman, *Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Heads Concerning People* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1971); A.C. Foskett, “Misogynists All: A Study in Critical Classification,” *Library Resources & Technical Services* 15 (1971): 117–21.

successful in their search. The social group catalogued as, for instance, 'deviant' because of its minority status, will interiorize and identify with this distorted perception.<sup>15</sup>

These critiques highlight the way in which librarian practices and classifications go beyond representation by constituting the basis for the very conception of binary difference (sex and gender for instance): it creates the concepts it is supposed to represent.

### *A gendered classification*

Several empirical studies have focused on terminological omission, distortion and marginalization.<sup>16</sup> They point out that controlling knowledge and information enables a 'certain vision of the world' to be created and perpetuated time and again. Marshall argued that indexes and library catalogues establish the bias of the existing tradition, meaning that they were designed for a straight, white, male, Christian norm.<sup>17</sup> Topics relating to women and minorities were subsumed under mainstream topics, some topics altogether omitted. For instance, subject headings existed for 'Sexual ethics for women/teenagers/youth', but not for 'Men'. Similarly, since marital status used to be coded onto women, users had to identify the female human being within a family building context only, without having to do so for the male human being. Other examples include the subject heading 'Homosexuality' that was classified under 'Disease', following a conservative or religious point of view.<sup>18</sup>

The LofC has addressed these critiques, especially during the 1960s and 1970s, when the LofC adjusted its cataloguing practices in answer to social movements who called the biased language that permeated society – and library

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Wong, "The Semantic derogation of *Tongzhi*: a synchronic perspective," In *Language and Sexuality. Contesting Meaning and Practice*, ed. Kathryn Campbell-Kibler et al. (Stanford: Centre for the Study of Language and Information, 2002), 161–74.

<sup>16</sup> See Hope. A Olson, "Mapping Beyond Dewey's Boundaries: Constructing Classificatory Space for Marginalized Knowledge Domains," *Library Trends* 47.2 (1998): 233–54.

<sup>17</sup> An earlier report carried out by the same author had such an impact that a commission was appointed in 1974 (Committee on Sexism in Subject Headings) and reviewed many subject headings. See Joan K. Marshall, *On Equal Terms: A Thesaurus for Nonsexist Indexing and Cataloging* (New York: Neal-Schuman, 1977).

<sup>18</sup> Steve Wolf, "Sex and the Single Cataloger: New Thoughts on Some Unthinkable Subjects," in *Revolting Librarians*, ed. Celeste West (San Francisco: Booklegger Press, 1972). Cf. Sexual orientation change efforts are still making headlines in 2012.

catalogues – into question.<sup>19</sup> In 1998 and 1999, the LofC added 5,000 subject headings and changed 1,000 headings in response to on-going cultural changes.<sup>20</sup> ‘Man’, for instance, was changed to ‘Human being’. Nevertheless, marginalization and distortions were still present in LofC headings until very recently, especially regarding works in gender, race, religion and ethnicity.<sup>21</sup> If we consider the subject heading ‘Feminism’, it included amongst its sub-headings only three feminisms, namely ‘Ecofeminism’, ‘Lesbian feminism’ and ‘Bisexual feminism’, erasing the main movements in feminist theory, amongst others ‘Liberal feminism’, ‘Socialist feminism’, ‘Material/Marxist feminism’. No ‘third world feminism’ either.<sup>22</sup> LofC thus used to privilege certain feminisms whilst marginalizing others. Changes have been made, and the main feminist movements, such as ‘First Wave feminism’ and ‘Socialist feminism’, are now included under the sub-headings.

### *Gendered knowledge*

Classifications are only one side of the coin. Feminist theory has produced a strong critique of gendered knowledge.<sup>23</sup> These critiques have shown how women’s knowledge, practices and history have been historically suppressed or deemed unimportant. For that matter, most researchers of gendered knowledge will agree that the hierarchical classifications we all became familiar with have functioned as “a tool of imperialism and of a positivist approach to knowledge in general and research in particular”.<sup>24</sup> Suzan Searing, who worked extensively on library prac-

<sup>19</sup> See Kara Hyde’s (2002) Master thesis “From suffrage to Postfeminism: an evolution of the Library of Congress subject treatment of women’s issues,” A Master’s paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree, April 2002, for a complete overview of subject heading changes since 1901. Hyde analyzes the evolution of societal views of women and the evolution of the Library of Congress subject headings and references used to describe them. See also Lois Mai Chan and Theodora Hodges, “Entering the Millennium: A New Century for LCSH,” *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 29.1-2 (2000): 225–34; Alva T. Stone, “The LCSH Century: A Brief History of the Library of Congress Subject Headings, and Introduction to the Centennial Essays,” *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 29.1-2 (2000): 1–15.

<sup>20</sup> Hope A. Olson, “Difference, Culture and Change: the Untapped Potential of LCSH,” *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 29.1-2 (2000), 68.

<sup>21</sup> Hope A. Olson and Rose Schlegl, “Bias in Subject Access Standards: A Content Analysis of the Critical Literature,” in *Information Science: Where Has It Been, Where Is It Going?*, ed. James Turner (Montréal: CAIS/ASCI, 1999), 236–47.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> See L. Spender, *Intruders on the Rights of Men: Women’s Unpublished Heritage* (London: Pandora Press, 1983); Dorothy E. Smith, “A Peculiar Eclipsing: Women’s Exclusion from Man’s Culture,” *Women’s Studies International Quarterly* 1 (1978): 281–95; Joanna Russ, *How to Suppress Women’s Writing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

<sup>24</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 25.



tices, has shown that the way non-mainstream knowledge is sorted out and communicated renders it irretrievable, if it has made its way into the library at all.<sup>25</sup>

During the last 60 years, developments in the interdisciplinary field of gender studies produced a body of new knowledge challenging the existing framework used in libraries. Any 'new field of knowledge' has to 'fit' in pre-existing outlines of knowledge. The fact that gender studies is by definition interdisciplinary, complicates this process: gender is a psychological, philosophical and sociological 'matter', to name only a few possible approaches. Interdisciplinarity challenges traditional structures such as library classifications. A call number, as Searing reminds us, is already *additional* information to the book; it is its 'subject profile', meant to bring together books on similar topics.<sup>26</sup> The LofC classifies women's research and feminist studies under the *social sciences division* (H). However, Searing found less than 25 percent of research on women assigned under the HQ subdivision<sup>27</sup> which is attributed to 'Family. Marriage. Women', a subject heading still linking women exclusively to their reproductive function.

In the UCYL this classification is still applied in the same way. However, from a librarian's point of view, the internal structure of the subdivision relates to many topics not essentially connected to women, such as sexuality. As such, the subject heading and/or its subdivisions should be revised. From a user point of view, the HQ subdivisions create and reflect prejudices and biased perceptions by restricting 'Sexual life' to 'Marriage and Family'. The subdivisions 'Men' and 'Women' take for granted the hetero-normative family model. 'Feminism' is found under 'Women', suggesting - in an essentialist move - that feminism does not concern men. There is no topic heading for 'Masculinism' or 'Antifeminism'. Such sentiments, discourses and positions are ubiquitous throughout the library's collection, but not named specifically or in relation to feminism.

Other gender-related research is dispersed throughout the library. This means that academics working in their respective field, whether it is 'Biology and gender' or 'Language and gender', will have to search other sections of the library as well as the HQ shelves. 'Language and gender' books are classified in the P

<sup>25</sup> Suzan E. Searing, "How Libraries Cope with Interdisciplinarity: The Case of Women's Studies," *Issues in Integrative Studies* 10 (1992).

<sup>26</sup> L.M. Chan, *Cataloging and Classification: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981), 209–15.

<sup>27</sup> Suzan E. Searing, "Report on a Study of Women's Studies Acquisitions at UW-Whitewater," *Feminist Collections* 4 (1983): 3–5.

section and 'Women's literature' under the PQ section, not together with feminist studies in the H section, although new technologies allow users to combine subject headings electronically.

Our reality check at the UCY has to take into account the ubiquitous hierarchy of Western culture and the bias<sup>28</sup> that is present in the LofC classification system, despite efforts by staff and academics to eradicate such bias from their own work.

### ***Reality check...at UCY***

#### *The institutionalization of gender studies in Cyprus*

Gender studies is quite a well-represented field of studies and research on the island of Cyprus. The Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS)<sup>29</sup> is the oldest entity in Cyprus working with gender as a variable. This non-profit organization also promotes and contributes to projects with social, political and economic themes relating to gender, with an emphasis on the Mediterranean region. The UCY, on the other hand, has had a UNESCO chair on gender studies since 2010, although so far this has not had an impact on the library subject headings. UCY offers a minor in Gender Studies (since 2008) as well as a Master's program (since 2012).

The UCY<sup>30</sup> is a young university (it opened its doors in 1992–1993) and has 6,000 students in a country with currently just under one million inhabitants. In December 2012 the UCY Library<sup>31</sup> held 320,000 printed books, resulting in 270,000 titles and almost 70,000 volumes of printed periodicals. Each year approximately 12,000 new titles are added to its collection. In recent years the UCYL has become practically fully electronic (function-wise) and hybrid (content-wise). Given its high standard of service and practices, UCYL has been recognized for its excellence.<sup>32</sup> Its acquisition criteria depend almost entirely on the good (or bad) will of academics, since each department has a library budget and

<sup>28</sup> Hope A. Olson, "How We Construct Subject: a Feminist Analysis," *Library Trends* 56.2 (2007): 518.

<sup>29</sup> See <http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/>.

<sup>30</sup> There are three state universities in the Republic: the University of Cyprus, the Technological University of Cyprus (in Limassol), and the Open University of Cyprus (all three of them use LofC.) There are four private universities and a small number of franchise universities (e.g. University of Lancashire, etc).

<sup>31</sup> See [http://library.ucy.ac.cy/ENGLISH/index\\_en.htm](http://library.ucy.ac.cy/ENGLISH/index_en.htm).

<sup>32</sup> In 2009 the University of Cyprus Library was granted the EFQM award "Recognized for Excellence" with 3 stars. This distinction is the second out of three EFQM award levels regarding the administration and management of organizations.

each academic can order what he or she wants within the limits of that department's budget. The Head of Cataloguing at UCY, Despina Lamprou, recognizes that this freedom has advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, each department has control over purchases. On the other hand, it would be advisable to hire a reference librarian specialized in gender, feminist and/or queer studies, since our hands-on research showed many gaps in the collection regarding this important field of research at UCY.

### *A small survey*

Our small survey included short questionnaires sent out by email to academics and students, as well as interviews with library staff. In our questionnaires we tried to include what Maron<sup>33</sup> identified as three ways of searching indexes. The first is subjective and relates to how an individual thinks before doing a search. The second is objective and asks which methods have been actually used in the search (which keywords for instance). The third concerns the retrieval and relates to the results of the search.

The satisfaction level of academics turned out to be highly dependent on the topic taught or researched. Since the departments themselves place the library orders, books on topics in a certain field will only be ordered if there is currently an academic in the staff who teaches or is engaged in research on that topic. When Fabienne Baider (co-author of this article) arrived in 2000, the library did not hold a copy of *The Second Sex* although the Greek translation was acquired in 1993. Such omissions limit what can be studied or taught at the university.

The UCYL uses the LofC subject heading and classification system. This choice was based on both practical and reliability considerations.<sup>34</sup> Therefore the UCY classification appears to mirror the shortcomings of this system, which were highlighted above. As far as library search and classification are concerned, it turned out that most students and academics do their book search online. No student in our survey had approached library staff for explanations or queries. We will take the field of language and gender as an example. Spender's seminal *Man Made Language* (1980) is catalogued in 'Sociolinguistics' only, and not cross-ref-

<sup>33</sup> M. E. Maron, "On Indexing, Retrieval and the Meaning of About," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 28 (1977): 38–43.

<sup>34</sup> LofC offers easy cataloguing and is considered by many librarians to be the most complete, accurate and up-to-date system, despite its admitted shortcomings.

erenced in 'Language & sex'. Coates & Cameron's *Women in Their Speech Communities* (1988) is referenced with the subject headings 'Language and languages' and 'Women', but not in 'Sociolinguistics'. Yet again, other choices exist, such as for Coates' *Women Talk* (1996) which is referenced with the subject heading 'Women' and the subheading 'Language'. Although materials from the 1990s onwards seem to be catalogued more consistently, such inconsistencies will affect book searches, search results and finally research in that discipline.

The collection itself also has its shortcomings. While it is sufficient for teaching queer theory at undergrad level, many fundamentals are missing. As queer theory was taught for the first time at the Master level this year, academics may not have had enough time to fill these gaps in the collection. In fact, there are only seven titles found under the recently added subject heading of 'Queer theory', and five under 'Queer studies'. While there is no lack of titles under 'Women's studies', 'Feminist studies' yields 69 titles, while 'Feminist theory' yields 258 and 'Masculinities' only 20 results.

There is also a dramatic shortage of books on gender and languages other than English. A *Language and Gender* course in English would find 83 titles if we exclude grammatical gender. For the French language the number drops dramatically to 20, and for the Greek language only one title was found when searching in 'Language and gender'. Although other relevant books may have simply been miss-referenced, there is an obvious imbalance - particularly in the context of UCY's bilingual (Greek and English) gender studies center. Students in the survey complained about the shortage of titles in languages other than English: "I was able to find some books; I want to write my research especially in language and gender, but fundamental titles were missing. I did find interesting books that I had not thought of when searching through the catalogue, like many books based on 'learning according to the sex of the student'. But I had to buy the missing books."

There are several reasons for the choice of English alone for the subject headings. Firstly, the largest part of the scientific bibliography is in English. Secondly, the UCYL catalogue is actually considered one of the best quality catalogues (in both scale and depth of analysis) in the Greek world by many foreign libraries, exactly because Greek books are attributed in English, while all Greek names of persons, locations and corporate bodies are mentioned in the Greek language. For example, if one searches for the Greek poet Elytes, an English query will refer to the Greek name.

The challenge of searching for items in languages other than English is not often addressed in the feminist critique of library classification. This is a curious omission, since language embodies cultural values and cultural divisions of realities<sup>35</sup> that will affect any translation of English keywords, leading to skewed search results. Although the UCYL's use of the LofC system has distinct advantages in terms of making the Greek record accessible internationally, our survey suggests that the hegemony of the English language, culture and worldview in academia permeates the UCYL's collection, classification system and the way it structures knowledge.

### *From linear thinking to circling and webbing*

Since libraries are the main instruments of the politics of knowledge,<sup>36</sup> classification criticism is a social justice gesture, and changes to classification systems are a form of political change. It answers hooks' call to bring marginal topics and dismissed knowledge 'from margin to center'.<sup>37</sup>

Although great progress has been made with regards to LofC subject headings, there are still significant shortcomings with regards to the field of gender/feminist/queer studies. For this reason, some forward-looking libraries have started using women-focused classification systems. This is, however, a very complicated and time and money consuming project. The Independent Feminist Library in London<sup>38</sup> has opted instead to create new subsections within the LofC structure, such as 'Violence against women' and 'Sexuality lifestyles'. 'Violence against women' can gather topics together such as incest, wife battering and rape. However, a more immediate way to palliate the inadequacies of the existing LofC system is to be candid about them at UCYL. Librarians can inform users of the inadequacies of the library classification and instruct students on research

<sup>35</sup> See Edward Sapir, *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech* (Harcourt: Brace, 1921); Benjamin Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, ed. John B. Carroll (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1956).

<sup>36</sup> Hope A. Olson, "Difference, Culture and Change: the Untapped Potential of LCSH," *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 29.1-2 (2000): 53; Suzan E. Searing, "How Libraries Cope with Interdisciplinarity: The Case of Women's Studies," *Issues in Integrative Studies* 10 (1992): 7.

<sup>37</sup> bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Cambridge, MA: Southern End Press, 2000 (1984)).

<sup>38</sup> Suzan E. Searing, "How Libraries Cope with Interdisciplinarity: The Case of Women's Studies," *Issues in Integrative Studies* 10 (1992): 8.

methods that palliate those caveats, and students can be motivated to ask them for help. Additionally, the presence of reference librarians in sections that are underrepresented in the library's collection (such as queer and lesbian studies) may help improve the UCYL.

Finally, a library of the future could be inspired by the present functions of wikis, collaborative tagging, and similar participatory forms. Indeed, newer library software systems already mobilize such "knowing communities".<sup>39</sup> This may offer a way out of the Aristotelian logic on which the linear organization of libraries is based, and may bring about the kind of change that Fixico,<sup>40</sup> Gilligan<sup>41</sup> and Belenky et al.<sup>42</sup> have called for. But even before we begin to dream of a new structure for knowledge, grounded in "connected knowing",<sup>43</sup> the characteristics of connectedness can already begin to inform an alternative model for the organization of information.

Through the rejection of a universal model, a focus on relationships, a rejection of hierarchical structure in favor of a web-like structure of knowledge, a focus on situatedness, the involvement of knowing communities, and the recognition of power as a primary factor in knowing, we may begin to change libraries into what Bhabha called the "third space".<sup>44</sup> Here the meanings of documents can be constructed and enunciated anew, and brought to their political and empowering potential.

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<sup>39</sup> Blythe Mcvicker Clinchy, "Connected and Separate Knowing: Toward a Marriage of Two Minds," in *Knowledge, Difference, and Power: Essays Inspired by Women's Ways of Knowing*, ed. N.R. Goldberger et al. (New York: Basic, 1996).

<sup>40</sup> Donald Fixico, *Mind in a Linear World: American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>41</sup> Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (London: Harvard University Press, 1982).

<sup>42</sup> Mary Field Belenky et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

<sup>43</sup> Hope A. Olson, "How We Construct Subject: a Feminist Analysis," *Library Trends* 56.2 (2007): 509–41.

<sup>44</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 37.

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# INFORMATION AS A TOOL FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

*Caroline Claeys*

## ***Introduction***

Social media have played an important strategic role in what is commonly known as the ‘Arab Spring’, a term used to describe the recent uprisings and actions for democratic transitions in some of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. On many occasions women were at the front of this cyber-activism, a form of activism which was viewed as one of the most important and powerful tools being used in these democratization processes. Less is known about other forms of information transfer which equally (could) have played a role in these transitions.

This article’s presentation of two different ‘formats’ of information exchange – the virtual information and documentation center FEMdoc on the one hand, and social media on the other hand – will demonstrate the use of information as a strategic tool for the empowerment of women in the Maghreb and Mashreq countries. By describing the interaction between gender studies research, women’s information libraries and the use of social media by women, the article aims to contribute to the teaching of gender studies and encourage teachers and students to think about different forms of information exchange and dissemination and the (political) function of information centers.

In what follows, the Women’s Foundation for the Mediterranean (WFM) is being described in the past tense, because it is no longer active today. Due to a lack of further financial support from the French government, the WFM was unfortunately declared bankrupt in the course of February 2012.

## ***The Women’s Foundation for the Mediterranean: a synergy of good practices, dissemination of information and networking in gender studies***

In 2009 the Women’s Foundation for the Mediterranean/*Fondation des Femmes pour la Méditerranée* was created to contribute to the strengthening of the status of women and the achievement of gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean

region. The project of the Women's Foundation for the Mediterranean was officially recognized by the signing of the Marrakech Declaration on 12 November 2009<sup>1</sup> by all 43 member states of the Union for the Mediterranean. The Marrakech Declaration states that "the Euro-Mediterranean partners, in accordance with their international obligations, reiterate their commitment to promote, de jure and de facto, equality between men and women and to respect the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of women as well as men".

Despite the context in which it was established, the WFM was intended to operate as an independent and autonomous international foundation, with its headquarters located in Paris, and governed by French law. Local branches in Jordan, Morocco and Lebanon were to be set up in the years to come. To fulfill its objectives, the WFM had set out to accomplish, amongst other things, the following missions<sup>2</sup>

to facilitate the flow of relevant knowledge concerning gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean region, to popularize and promote the practices implemented by key organizations striving for gender equality, and to use this material to develop program proposals to promote equality and contribute to the public debate in the region. Right from the start, the WFM was trying to build networks and to create a synergy between policy makers, academia and civil society. In doing so, its efforts could be considered a laboratory showcase of reciprocal transfer of experience and knowledge between different advocates committed to women's rights and gender equality: gender studies researchers, NGOs, ministries and departments of women's rights, local authorities and collectivities, and businesses.

The Foundation's trilingual 'Internet Platform' (in Arabic, English, and French) offered these different stakeholders the possibility to share expertise, information and good practices in the field of gender equality. In addition, the 'Academic and Scientific Network' (*Réseau Universitaire et Scientifique*) together with the

<sup>1</sup> Union for the Mediterranean, "Conclusions of the Second Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, Marrakesh, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2009," European Commission External Relations 2009, [http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/women/docs/2009\\_11\\_conference\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/women/docs/2009_11_conference_en.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Women's Foundation for the Mediterranean, *Let's work together to achieve gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean region*. Unpublished position paper. (Paris: Women's Foundation for the Mediterranean, 2011); ---, *Euro-Mediterranean Observatory for Gender Equality*. Unpublished presentation paper. (Paris: Women's Foundation for the Mediterranean, 2011).

‘virtual information and documentation center FEMdoc’ were contributing to the Foundation’s goals by developing academic and scientific partnerships and by disseminating and exchanging women’s information and gender studies research in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

***FEMdoc: a virtual information and documentation center  
on gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean region***

The virtual documentation center of the Women’s Foundation for the Mediterranean, FEMdoc, was intended as a future focal point for the dissemination and exchange of women’s information and gender studies research in the Euro-Mediterranean region. It focused more precisely on information regarding gender equality policies, grassroots women’s movements, gender studies and women’s businesses in the Maghreb and Mashreq countries, in accordance with the main objectives of the WFM and the main actors involved in its community-based internet platform.

FEMdoc gathered online information (papers, reports, conference proceedings etc.) from all these actors and made it accessible in full text in its database on the WFM website. The retrieval of the electronic documents was made possible by using the global search engine in either the Arabic, English or French section of the site and thus doing a full text search in all the elements of the bibliographic descriptions (author, title, words in the title, editor, words in the summary, ...) or by entering directly a free key word in the FEMdoc database. An additional search aid in the form of a structured thesaurus was under construction.

The FEMdoc catalogue, containing documents in three languages (French, English and Arabic), offered a broad range of full text documents related to gender equality and to women’s rights, education, and the economic and political participation of women in the Euro-Mediterranean region. So far it seemed not to be different in any kind from other specialized documentation and information centers focusing on gender equality issues which also collect electronic resources, except maybe for its geographical scope (the 43 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean region), its specific focus on Maghreb and Mashreq countries and its trilingual access to (trilingual) information.

However, the ‘collection development’ of FEMdoc could not be interpreted in the classical sense of what we, information professionals, are likely to consider

a structured method of the gathering of documents on the basis of clearly defined criteria. The FEMdoc collection was partly meant to be a shared collection, developed by the members of the communities involved with the WFM-platform themselves. Although controlled and validated by an information specialist, each actor who was a member of one of the communities on the site could introduce relevant information and documentation to the FEMdoc database, thus making it accessible not only for the members of its community but also for a larger public. This working method made it possible to keep in pace with all relevant developments in the MENA region regarding the situation of women. Actors from the MENA region (be it researchers, policy makers, or activists) could share accurate information and experiences with each other, and furthermore, could make the information accessible to colleagues in the north and vice versa.

While collecting publications on academic gender research, FEMdoc was also connecting with women's organizations and projects to collect information on local experiences and good practices on equality between women and men in the Euro-Mediterranean Region. Besides making gender research accessible and available for a larger public, FEMdoc also had the ambition to contribute to the acknowledgement of information needs in society by transmitting them to research and policy. Operating in-between academia and civil society, FEMdoc could be considered a showcase of reciprocal transfer of knowledge between those two levels.

### ***From resource center to knowledge sharing platform: a key to women's empowerment?<sup>3</sup>***

Right from the start FEMdoc took a clear stand regarding its position in the European working field of gender equality information centers. It recognized that specialized libraries and documentation centers in Europe (such as Atria in Amsterdam and Amazone in Brussels) are already offering a broad range of documents on issues relating to gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean region. But few or almost none of them are concentrating on the developments in the

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<sup>3</sup> Women's empowerment, as defined by the United Nations, has five components: women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally. For the full document, see <http://www.un.org/popin/unfpa/taskforce/guide/iatfwemp.gdl.html>.

Maghreb and Mashreq countries. Furthermore, the specialized libraries that are operating in the southern areas are not known in the north (and vice versa), and are hardly coordinating their efforts and their work. This lack of mutual knowledge and cooperation at the Euro-Mediterranean level together with language barriers hinder the flow of information. This has an impact on our teaching sources and, more broadly, on the ability to forge a transnational feminism.

FEMdoc also distinguished itself from already existing documentation centers because it was part of the community-based idea and practice of the WFM that wanted to bring together all the different agents of gender equality of the Euro-Mediterranean region on its internet platform. FEMdoc was intended not only to operate as a knowledge and resource center for academic publications and all sorts of documents on gender equality, and eventually in the future even as a portal-access to resources on gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean region. It was also clearly defined as part of a social network of communities, where information, knowledge and experience could be shared between the different actors involved in the project of the WFM.

This (partly) community-based definition of FEMdoc concretely involved the participation of the members of the networks assembled by the WFM in the collection development of the documentation center: the ministries and departments of women's rights in the Euro-Mediterranean countries, local authorities, associations, research institutions, researchers and academics and businesses, and last but not least the network of WFM local branches. All these different agents of gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean region who were in one way or another participating in the networks of the WFM could actively contribute to the collection of FEMdoc.

Rather than a 'classical' documentation center, FEMdoc had to be an active participatory information platform where online data and publications on actual developments related to gender equality in the region (information on new laws, on new political developments, on new research, and on new women's groups and organizations) could be made accessible by and for researchers, activists, policy makers, and journalists. FEMdoc wanted to be an active agent contributing directly to the increase of gender equality and women's empowerment in the Maghreb and Mashreq region, complementary to other forms of 'information activism'.

As an example of this, FEMdoc was actively involved in the preparation of the international symposium 'Women, Networks, and "Revolutions": Democ-

racy Through the Prism of Gender in the Euro-Mediterranean' (Paris, December 2011), organized by the Academic and Scientific Network of the WFM. This symposium gathered more than 300 activists, academics, journalists and members of non-governmental organizations from both sides of the Mediterranean, to debate the outcomes of the Arab Spring for the lives of women in the countries involved from a gender studies' perspective.

The symposium could be regarded as a concrete example of the synergy between the different communities (gender studies academics, NGOs, policy makers) that took part in the WFM. The specific theme of the conference that, at that point, had not yet been the object of (gender studies) research, was capable of mobilizing women and men from very different countries (from Norway to Egypt) that were for various reasons interested by or involved in the Arab Spring (journalists, writers, activists, policy makers, academics etc.). The symposium was also a showcase of the "activist" involvement of a documentation center, as was the case with FEMdoc. The research and gathering of documents from the south, the contacts and the exchange of information with gender studies units and documentation centers in the north and the south on issues related to the Arab spring, was all part of the "documentation work" necessary to prepare the symposium.

According to the organizing committee and many of the participants, the symposium was not only an important academic achievement but also a meeting that gave a platform to multiple informal exchanges and dialogues between northern and southern researchers and activists. Unfortunately, due to the fact that shortly after the symposium the WFM faced financial problems, it was impossible to organize a follow-up meeting to the event and to continue the contacts that were established.

***From information exchange to activism:  
women utilizing social media to catalyze change***

During the Arab Spring, social media were particularly used as primary media by women activists to disseminate information, to raise awareness and to mobilize other women in their own countries and abroad. At the same time, the visibility of women using social media during those transitions and their increasing visibility in the mainstream media as a consequence of this cyber-activism, contributed

to their visibility as active agents in their countries and thus to their political empowerment.

In 2011 the findings of the Arab Social Media Report of the Dubai School of Government<sup>4</sup> showed that, although Arab women seem to be somewhat behind in their usage of social networks compared to other women around the world, social media are perceived by them as a useful tool to increase women's civic participation. The regional study, which was conducted between April and October 2011 among 469 respondents, highlights the trend of women's increasing presence in social media in the Arab world. According to the survey, Arab men and women increasingly view social media as an effective tool for women's civic, political and economic empowerment. However, a 'virtual' gender gap prevails, as only one third of Facebook users in the Arab region are women, in stark contrast to women being around half of the users globally. Despite women's active engagement in civic and political affairs by using social media, as was the case during the Arab Spring, the number of Arab men using social media is still twice the number of women. The main reasons for this gender gap are family and social barriers as well as gender stereotypes. Other explanations mentioned are that women tend to be less computer literate or do not have access to computers or the Internet.

But despite the fact that women use social media to a lesser extent than do men, it is clear that their use of social media during the Arab Spring has had quite some positive effects in itself. First of all it challenged the stereotypes about Arab women as oppressed and subservient. Their leading role in the social movements as equal partners at the sides of men, particularly demonstrated by their use of social media, offered them an image of active players in civil society. Furthermore, according to the Arab Social Media Report, social media are working as a form of 'gender equalizer', meaning that Arab women and men use social media in similar ways and that they have similar opinions on the role social media can play in women's empowerment.

Social media also changed perceptions about women and civic participation. A majority of respondents regarded social media as an empowering and engaging tool for women in the social, economic, legal, political and civic arenas.

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<sup>4</sup> Racha Mourtada and Fadi Salem, "The Role of Social Media in Arab Women's Empowerment," in *Arab Social Media Report Series* vol. 1, no 3, Dubai School of Government, <http://www.arabsocialmediareport.com/UserManagement/PDF/ASMR%20Report%203.pdf>.



As these perceptions contrast with the reality of gender inequalities in the Arab region, social media can potentially be a change agent towards women's empowerment in Arab societies.

***Libraries and documentation centers:  
new definitions for the future?***

The mediating role in the exchange of information as offered by the virtual information and documentation center FEMdoc, as well as by the use of social media and social networks in general, puts forward possible new ways of looking at the storage, dissemination and retrieval of information and at possible new concepts of libraries as temporary and dynamic clusters of knowledge and experience sharing. Those new concepts and views could also have an influence on how gender studies teaching and research relates to and reflects on new domains of information gathering, retrieval and dissemination.

The collections of so-called libraries and documentation centers have long ceased to be only physical collections of documents that are related to clearly defined and fixed spaces. Nowadays most libraries have integrated electronic documents in their collections which can be consulted (in full text) by any (paying) visitor consulting their online catalogue. However, most of these digital collections are still operating in a 'classical library' environment, where collection development and retrieval methods are strictly and solely defined by information specialists, without any input from the producers and users of the information themselves.

The concept of FEMdoc, fully embedded in the community-based environment that was part of the WFM, was meant not only to be a portal for digital resources, but also as a platform for sharing information and knowledge. FEMdoc was not just about data collection and data storage. The networking of content was equally important to its collecting, storage and indexing activities. The documentation center did not operate in a one-way direction from librarian/information specialist to 'reader' as it was meant to be part of a decentralized social network of different stakeholders of the WFM, where each 'member' could introduce its relevant documents on gender equality (in full text) to the FEMdoc catalogue and share them with others. FEMdoc was – not entirely but partly – about user-generated content, as part of a community-based platform where



gender studies researchers, grassroots women's organizations, local women's projects, and gender equality policy makers could give access and gain access to information about gender equality developments, policies and researches in their respective communities, organizations, universities and countries.

According to this concept the collecting, storage and distribution of information via FEMdoc was to be interpreted as a medium to activate, mobilize and connect the different agents relating to gender issues and gender studies in the Euro-Mediterranean region and thus contributing concretely to the enhancement of gender equality and women's empowerment.

This strategy of sharing data, information and good practices in a multi-way direction, as opposed to the 'classical' hierarchy of one-way document delivery, was meant to foster the strengthening of networking and partnerships between different communities and stakeholders, but also between different countries and even continents, as was the case between Europe and the countries of the Southern Mediterranean. FEMdoc, set up as a real knowledge and information sharing platform, was not in any way bound by the limits of definitions and practices of a classical library/documentation center. It had all the potentials to be a strong and effective information tool that would influence the societal and political developments in favor of women's empowerment and gender equality during and following the Arab Spring.

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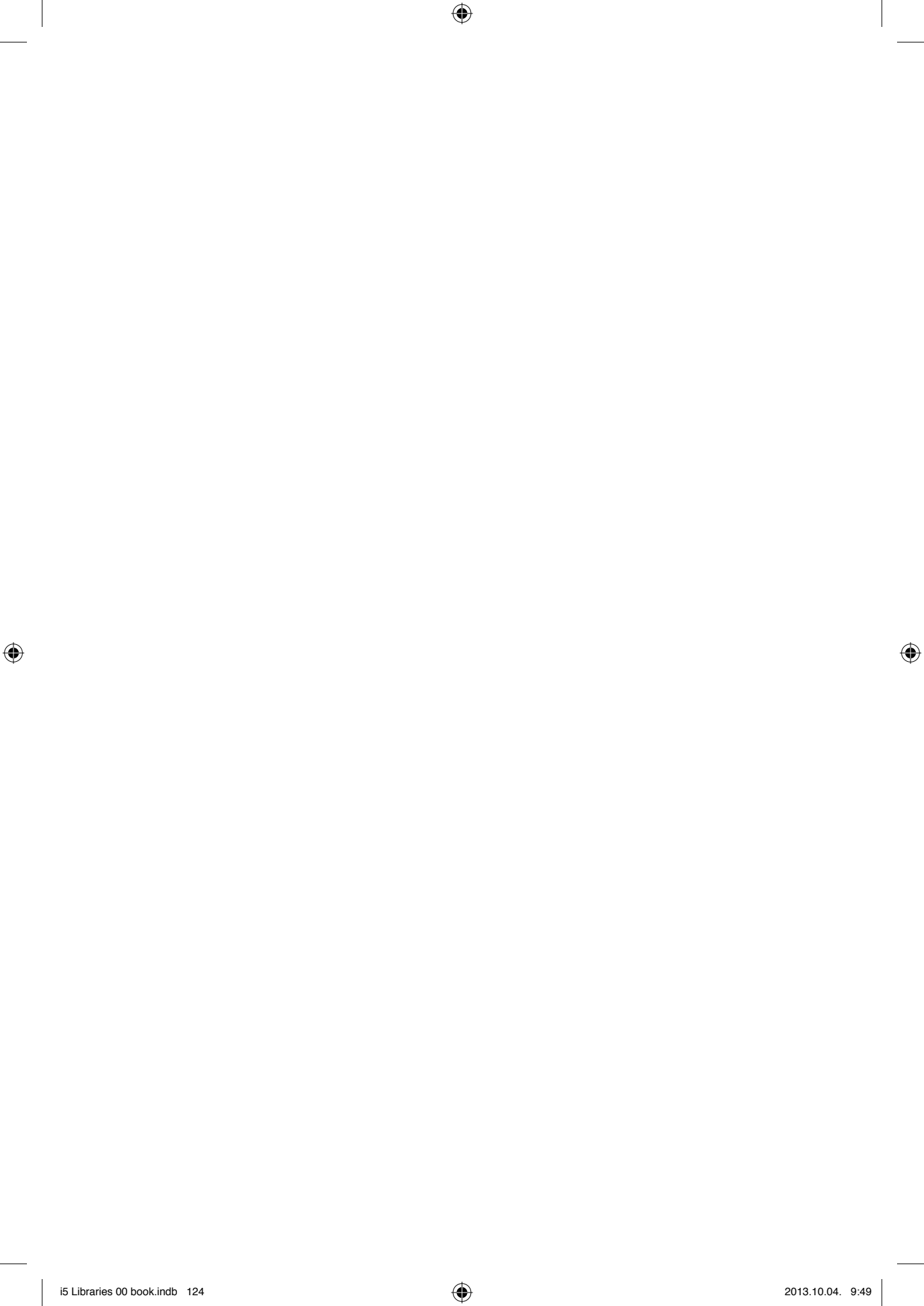
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SECTION 3

# UTOPIAS



## REFLECTIONS ON GLASGOW WOMEN'S LIBRARY: THE PRODUCTION OF CULTURAL MEMORY, IDENTITY AND CITIZENSHIP

*Tanita L. Maxwell*

Recent feminist research claims that Scottish women have been doubly marginalized in historiography.<sup>1</sup> As a result of this, Glasgow Women's Library (GWL) has developed a variety of creative strategies to challenge the neglect and invisibility of women's cultural contributions to Scottish society. Innovative ventures have been established, such as the Black and Minority Ethnic History Project, the Women Make History Project and the Mapping Memorials of Women in Scotland Programme<sup>2</sup> which bring women's experiences to the fore, an aim which also lies at the core of contemporary feminist research.<sup>3</sup> This article will describe and analyze these projects in further detail. Firstly, it will examine feminist practices at GWL, outlining the ways in which knowledge is collected, archived and produced. Secondly, it will describe the Black and Minority Ethnic History Project and the Women Make History Project and their roles in encouraging dialogue, discussion and reflection. Finally, it will discuss the Mapping Memorials of Women in Scotland Project and the processes involved in the inscription of cultural memory and citizenship onto the Scottish landscape.

The aim of this article is to closely examine current activities and recent developments at GWL in order to highlight the ways in which power and knowledge are negotiated, resisted and reproduced. It thereby contributes to ongoing debates about the role of women's libraries in creating, preserving and dissemi-

<sup>1</sup> See Esther Breitenbach, "Curiously Rare? Scottish Women of Interest or The Suppression of the Female in the Construction of National Identity," *Scottish Affairs* 18 (1997): 82–94. Many feminist researchers have addressed the neglect of women in historiography by making women the focus of their enquiry. This can be seen in several texts, for example: V. Wright, "Women's Organizations and Feminism in Interwar Scotland" (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 2008); Jane McDermid, *The Schooling of Working-Class Girls in Victorian Scotland: Gender, Education and Identity* (Oxon: Routledge, 2005); William Knox, *The Lives of Scottish Women: Women and Scottish Society, 1800–1980* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); Esther Breitenbach and Eleanor Gordon, *Out of Bounds: Women in Scottish Society 1800–1945* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> With thanks to Adele Patrick, Lifelong Learning and Creative Development Manager and founding member of Glasgow Women's Library for her valuable insights into feminist librarianship.

<sup>3</sup> Dale Spender, "Modern Feminist Theorists: Reinventing Rebellion," in *Feminist Theorists: Three Centuries of Key Women Thinkers*, ed. Dale Spender (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 368.

nating knowledge. The argument put forward is that women's libraries are active and dynamic sites of knowledge production that enter into a dialectical dialogue with service users through feminist<sup>4</sup> activities.

### *The politics of knowledge: gender studies and women's libraries*

Women's Studies should include greater cooperation between faculty and librarians to teach students not just the techniques of finding information but the skills of critical selection and reading. Only by unveiling the values implicit in traditional knowledge structures ... only by understanding their weaknesses can we begin to imagine information systems better suited to integrative studies.<sup>5</sup>

Women's libraries and gender studies uncover the politics of knowledge systems, promote critical thinking and question taken-for-granted ideas and assumptions. In the following section I will discuss the ways in which feminist knowledge has influenced practices at GWL. While feminist pedagogy has thoroughly examined power dynamics and knowledge production in the classroom setting, this article invites teachers and students of gender studies to reflect upon how these considerations may apply to women's libraries.<sup>6</sup>

Being overlooked in historiography has had negative consequences for women. Without a recognized role in history, women have been "denied a vital tool for contemporary and future attainment".<sup>7</sup> To address this lack of acknowledgement, feminist theory and research has been established. Topics which had not focused on women previously are now given due attention and analysis because, as Longino claims, "feminists, faced with traditions [...] that are deeply

<sup>4</sup> In this article, I will use the term 'feminist' to refer to 'pro woman, political and socially transformational endeavours' which comes from Patricia Martin's definition in: Patricia Martin, "Rethinking Feminist Organizations," *Gender and Society* 4.2 (1990): 184.

<sup>5</sup> Susan Searing, "How Libraries Cope with Interdisciplinarity: The Case of Women's Studies," *Issues in Integrative Studies* 10 (1992): 24.

<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of this article I will use the term library to refer to 'the totality of the institution—people, services, collections, access to information, social space', an idea developed by John M. Budd in his analysis of academic libraries and knowledge production in: John M. Budd, "Academic Libraries and Knowledge: A Social Epistemology Framework," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 30.5 (2004): 361.

<sup>7</sup> Suzanne Hildenbrand, "Library Feminism and Library Women's History: Activism and Scholarship, Equity and Culture," *Libraries and Culture* 35.1 (2000): 53.

hostile to women, have had actively to invent new and more appropriate ways of knowing the world".<sup>8</sup> They have investigated "how gender influences the creation and use of human knowledge"<sup>9</sup> and through feminist standpoint theory have illuminated issues with knowledge creation, negotiation and reproduction. As Welton asserts "the political significance of standpoint theory rests on its claim to represent marginalized knowledges",<sup>10</sup> and the acknowledgement of multiple standpoints "provides a different view on the hegemonic reality".<sup>11</sup> In her feminist analysis of photographs of working class women in the early 1940s, Ellis argues that working class female identity has been constructed, confined and repressed by "economic disadvantage and systemic marginalization"<sup>12</sup> which has been defined from a middle class perspective. This example serves to highlight the importance of creating a fuller and more representative social history. Feminist theorists have also problematized dichotomies which shape our understanding of the world around us, such as man/woman, reason/emotion and mind/body, and have unraveled the work these dualisms do in reflecting and reproducing gendered inequalities.

However, to illustrate how feminist knowledge has impacted on the practices at GWL, it is important to note that almost all of the books in its lending library collection have been donated by members of the public. By building up an entire collection from donations, this breaks down hierarchies and challenges the traditional view that libraries are set apart from the rest of society. It serves to make links between service users and the library and creates "a unique sense of true ownership".<sup>13</sup> Since GWL holds many feminist texts in the collection, it is an active contributor in the representation of marginalized feminist knowledges.

<sup>8</sup> Helen Longino, "Subjects, Power and Knowledge: Description and Prescription," in *Feminist Philosophies of Science in Feminist Epistemologies*, ed. Linda Alcoff (New York: Routledge, 1993), 101. Also see Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge Thinking from Women's Lives* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1991); Mary Gergen, *Feminist Thought and the Structure of Knowledge* (New York: New York University Press, 1988); Jane Duran, *Worlds of Knowing: Global Feminist Epistemologies* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Lorraine Code, *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991).

<sup>9</sup> Susan Searing, "How Libraries Cope with Interdisciplinary: The Case of Women's Studies," *Issues in Integrative Studies* 10 (1992): 7.

<sup>10</sup> Katherine Welton, "Nancy Hartstock's Standpoint Theory: From Content to 'Concrete Multiplicity,'" *Women and Politics* 18.3 (1997): 8.

<sup>11</sup> Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan, *50 Key Concepts in Gender Studies* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 165.

<sup>12</sup> Jacqueline Ellis, "Revolutionary Spaces: Photographs of Working-Class Women by Esther Bubley 1940–1943," *Feminist Review* 53 (1996): 74.

<sup>13</sup> 'Glasgow Women's Library: Who We Are and What We Do' Information Sheet – available from Glasgow Women's Library.



As Lugones and Spelman claim, “feminist theory - of all kinds - is to be based on, or anyway touches base with, the variety of real life stories women provide about themselves”.<sup>14</sup> GWL reaches out to women in their local communities who can then directly contribute to the collections and influence the knowledge available to others. If a book has had a strong impact upon one woman’s life, they are able to share this with other users of the library. Weiler makes clear that “just as power, knowledge must have a claim to credibility, and requires recognition of which it must be “worthy”.<sup>15</sup> By accepting books donated by women, GWL has created a library and space which reflects women’s interests and lives. As Spender claims, because knowledge production, preservation and collection processes have been dominated by men, “being able to generate, validate and control our own knowledge about ourselves and society is then of critical importance to women”.<sup>16</sup> Women’s libraries have become active sites of knowledge exchange through their collection strategies.

GWL connects women to each other through the exchange of donated books and as Boere claims, “from collection to connection, libraries have become more and more information intermediaries rather than merely information collectors”.<sup>17</sup> This means that women’s libraries have an important role in bringing women together and providing a space to reflect upon shared experiences. For example, to mark the Library’s twenty-first birthday, twenty-one female artists have created new fine art prints inspired by the library collections and Shauna McMullan, one of the artists in the program, has incorporated annotations and notes women have made in some of the books into her piece of art. Her art highlights the close relationship women have to the books they read and also draws attention to the book as a symbol of communication and connectivity.

In addition to collection strategies, since 2008, The Women on the Shelf (WoTS) initiative has also been developed, which enables individuals and organi-

<sup>14</sup> Maria Lugones and Elizabeth Spelman, “Have We Got a Theory for You!: Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism and the Demand for ‘The Woman’s Voice,’” in *Hypathia Reborn: Essays in Feminist Philosophy*, eds. Azizah Y. Al-Hibri and Margaret A. Simons (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990): 21.

<sup>15</sup> Hans N. Weiler, “Whose Knowledge Matters? Development and the Politics of Knowledge,” in *Development as a Career*, ed. Theodor Hanf, Hans N. Weiler and Helga Dickow (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2009), 488.

<sup>16</sup> Dale Spender, “Modern Feminist Theorists: Reinventing Rebellion,” in *Feminist Theorists: Three Centuries of Key Women Thinkers*, ed. Dale Spender (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 369.

<sup>17</sup> Marianne Boere, “Managing a Women’s Periodicals Collection in a Women’s Library,” *The Serials Librarian*, 35.1-2 (1998): 240.

zations to sponsor a Women's Library book, shelf or section. Each sponsor and dedication will be acknowledged and recorded. The aim of the initiative is to celebrate the lives of women, make hidden histories visible and also raise funds for the re-launch of the library in new premises in 2013.

### *Preserving feminist knowledge: archives and classification procedures*

Current research indicates that interdisciplinary scholars differ from their single discipline colleagues in information-seeking strategies and patterns. They may use multiple interpersonal networks, expend significant resources in crossing boundaries, and struggle with inadequate periodical indexing.<sup>18</sup>

As I have outlined, GWL has created a lending library which reflects and validates women's choices and interests. It has also utilized and enhanced the connections women have to the library through the WoTS initiative. However, in what ways can the library be said to preserve existing feminist knowledge?

As Taylor argues, "we usually assume that libraries are organized along some unbiased and naturalistic way of thinking of knowledge".<sup>19</sup> But as feminist research demonstrates, classification systems are socially constructed and thus often reflect hegemonic assumptions about gender. Taylor argues that when libraries have been confronted with Queer materials their response has been 'heterosexist'. However, Taylor does acknowledge that librarians may unconsciously perpetuate these prejudices rather than actively trying to do so. In general library systems such as university libraries, "the classification system functions as a hegemonic representation of human knowledge" and writings that "cross the boundaries of the disciplines" or "fall outside the mainstream of standard systems for storing and communicating knowledge"<sup>20</sup> often fail to make it onto the shelves. This helps to maintain a hierarchy of 'worthy' and 'unworthy' texts and items. Yet in GWL, there are books, badges, posters, newspaper cuttings and leaflets available. These items are preserved in the library, creating a treasure trove of historical yet often overlooked items. As Taylor argues, "the notion of the 'text', once severely limited in scope,

<sup>18</sup> Lynn Westbrook, "Information Needs and Experiences of Scholars in Women's Studies: Problems and Solutions," *College and Research Libraries* (2003): 193.

<sup>19</sup> Marvin J. Taylor, "Queer Things from Old Closets: Libraries – Gay and Lesbian Studies – Queer Theory," *Rare Books and Manuscripts Librarianship* 8 (1993): 24.

<sup>20</sup> Susan Searing, "How Libraries Cope with Interdisciplinary: The Case of Women's Studies," *Issues in Integrative Studies* 10 (1992): 8.

can now include a larger variety of cultural objects, including ephemera, graphics, and realia”.<sup>21</sup> The inclusion of these items at GWL provides a small window into the activities of grass roots organizations and feminist activist groups who may not have published books or formal documents themselves.



*Illustration 5 – Picture of the International Women’s Day celebrations 2012  
(Courtesy of Glasgow Women’s Library)*

The interdisciplinary nature of gender studies, which has been deemed one of its key strengths,<sup>22</sup> also acts to subvert “the neat disciplinary boundaries to which we are accustomed”.<sup>23</sup> As Threadgold argues: “Many of the new directions in Women’s and Gender Studies have actually begun to confound the distinction between the Humanities and the Social Sciences. Feminist work in policy, in cultural policy studies, with government, and in communities, in law and legal theory, in social work and social theory, in education and pedagogy, all cross this larger boundary as well as the boundaries of the disciplines within the Humanities.”<sup>24</sup>

The sheer breadth and depth of topics covered in gender studies poses tangible challenges for the collection and classification of gender studies texts and information. Yet this also points to the impressive possibilities gender studies students have when coming to choose and research a specific topic.

<sup>21</sup> Marvin J. Taylor, “Queer Things from Old Closets: Libraries – Gay and Lesbian Studies – Queer Theory,” *Rare Books and Manuscripts Librarianship* 8 (1993): 19.

<sup>22</sup> Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan, *50 Key Concepts in Gender Studies* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), x-xii.

<sup>23</sup> Marvin J. Taylor, “Queer Things from Old Closets: Libraries – Gay and Lesbian Studies – Queer Theory,” *Rare Books and Manuscripts Librarianship* 8 (1993): 19.

<sup>24</sup> Terry Threadgold, “Gender Studies and Women’s Studies,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 15.31 (2000): 46.

Rather than have one section with ‘women’ or ‘feminism’ as typically found in some university library collections, GWL uses a European Women’s Thesaurus classification system which “bespeaks a very different view of women’s experiences than implied by traditional knowledge systems”.<sup>25</sup> This means that there is a wide variety of sections at the library, including: violence against women, feminism, sexuality, media, work, law and rights, lesbian history and culture, politics, family and relationships, technology and science, female artists, economic and social issues, fiction and poetry and biographies and autobiographies. The European Women’s Thesaurus provides the library with a tool for indexing, organizing and retrieving information.<sup>26</sup> GWL serves to show the ways in which women’s libraries utilize feminist ideas such as being non-hierarchical, open and inclusive in their collection and archival practices. As some women’s libraries such as the Women’s Library in London are currently coming under threat of closure,<sup>27</sup> it has become increasingly important to discuss if and why they provide an important symbolic and social space for new possibilities in the creation, preservation and dissemination of feminist knowledge.



*Illustration 6 – GWL Book Group Special; Picture of the 2011 World Book Night (Courtesy of Glasgow Women’s Library)*

<sup>25</sup> Susan Searing, “How Libraries Cope with Interdisciplinary: The Case of Women’s Studies,” *Issues in Integrative Studies* 10 (1992): 8.

<sup>26</sup> Gusta Drenthe, *European Women’s Thesaurus: A Structured List of Descriptors for Indexing and Retrieving Information in the Field of the Position of Women and Women’s Studies* (Amsterdam: International Information Centre and Archives for the Women’s Movement (IIAV), 1998); see also the article by De Jong and Wieringa in this book.

<sup>27</sup> Jane Purvis, “Urgent: The Women’s Library under threat,” *Women’s History Review* 21.3 (2012): 339–40.

GWL has also broken down social and cultural hierarchies through the establishment of book groups and walking tours, engaging with women who may be vulnerable, unfamiliar with libraries and low in cultural capital.<sup>28</sup> For example, the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Project assists women to build upon reading and writing skills, which is particularly useful for those who may not have English as their first language. These socially transformational activities bring together new and diverse communities of women who may not have engaged with libraries previously. Alongside the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Project, a Black and Minority Ethnic Project has been created with the guidance of Syra Ahmed, the Black and Minority Ethnic Development Officer, which I will now go on to discuss in more detail.

### ***Black and Minority Ethnic Project***

How fitting for the kaleidoscope to be a Scottish invention. Notions circling the mind in search of a 'Scottish identity,' as any identity, are only too often captives in an arrangement of mirrors, a constantly shifting pattern of a few well-trapped components<sup>29</sup>

Although library activities center around the collection, organization and preservation of information sources, they simultaneously provide a framework for the construction and dissemination of new knowledge. The Black and Ethnic Minority Project connects women from South Asian, African and Indian descent, and provides a social space for identities to be constructed and new knowledge to form. For example, the Black and Ethnic Minority Project has established a film group, book group and oral history project, which give women in the local community an opportunity to discuss and reflect upon cultural similarities and differences. For teachers of gender studies, the project shows the new and creative strategies women's libraries are using to reach out to women in the community.

The Black and Minority Ethnic Women's History Project documents the lives of women from migrant communities and shows how culture and tradition have shaped their experiences in Glasgow. This project has resulted in the com-

<sup>28</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. E. Richardson (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 1986): 241–58.

<sup>29</sup> Mary Beith, *Being Scottish: Personal Reflections on Scottish Identity Today* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2002): 15.

pletion of a book, *She Settles in the Shields*, which includes some of the stories these women have told about coming to Glasgow; from how to deal with the weather to accents and language difficulties, and to the establishment of new businesses and ventures in the city. These activities promote the integration of women from varied backgrounds and means that knowledge about Scottish women now includes those from black and ethnic minority heritage. In their discussion of feminism and oral history projects, Leydesdorff, Passerini and Thompson claim that they have “converged in the development of both methodology and interpretation”<sup>30</sup> because each have recognized the importance of respect and reciprocity in the research process.

Although I have acknowledged that women and in particular Scottish women have been neglected in historiography, it is important to note that it is only recently that feminist research and theory has begun to address black and ethnic minority women as affected by racism, sexism and prejudice. Macauley illustrates the dynamic cultural and literary contributions black women have made to society in her research but also demonstrates the under-explored and under-researched aspects of black culture.<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, in her analysis of the construction of black identity as a multi-racial signifier by Asian, African and Caribbean women in Britain, Sudbury found that the women she interviewed from Edinburgh had some “allegiances to Scottish nationalist ideologies”,<sup>32</sup> which challenges the “essentializing discourse on black women”.<sup>33</sup> This suggests that more research is needed on the lives of black and ethnic minority women in Scotland as this would better represent the current culturally diverse population.

As discussed, women’s libraries such as GWL provide and re-claim a symbolic space for women to challenge the ways in which men have traditionally used “knowledge and space to enhance their privileged position”.<sup>34</sup> For teachers of gender studies, this means that their students can critically engage with the library as an active site of creativity, rather than assume the library is a hierarchi-

<sup>30</sup> Selma Leydesdo, Luisa Passerini and Paul Thomson, eds., *Gender and Memory: International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 5.

<sup>31</sup> Delia Jarrett-Macauley, ed., *Reconstructing Womanhood, Reconstructing Feminism: Writings on Black Women* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>32</sup> Julia Sudbury, “(Re)constructing multiracial blackness: women’s activism, difference and collective identity in Britain,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 24.1 (2001): 42.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Daphne Spain, “Gendered Spaces and Women’s Status,” *Sociological Theory* 11.2 (1993): 147.



cal depository of knowledge. This article also invites gender studies students to ask what traditional information systems, knowledge producers and collections have been omitted, forgotten or deemed unimportant. In the next section I will describe the oral history and community outreach projects taking place at GWL and reflect upon how these activities combine and connect to theoretical questions concerning gender, power and knowledge.

### ***Women make history: cultural memory, identity and citizenship***

The Women Make History Project is an excellent example of how knowledge, cultural memory, citizenship and identity are interwoven. In 2007, the Women Make History walking tours were established, which initially began from an open meeting of sixty women who discussed possible options for making history interesting and relevant. It was decided to inscribe previously hidden histories of women onto the city landscape through a series of walking tours:

- West End Women's Heritage Walk
- Glasgow Merchant City Women's Heritage Walk
- Glasgow Necropolis Women's Heritage Walk
- Glasgow East End Women's Heritage Walk

These four walking groups openly acknowledge the creative and cultural contributions of women as significant and worthy of attention. Volunteers, library members and staff have taken part in the research process, building their skills and capabilities. Now many of the women take turns in leading the walking tours. Maps have been drawn up, marking sites of interest and places where women have made a mark on Scottish society and culture. Walks such as these allow women to connect with the past and provide an innovative way to create memories and evoke a sense of Scottish citizenship. By changing the way that women relate to their physical surroundings and environment, these walking tours actively encourage reflection. Although the library has traditionally been seen as a place where books are kept and where people come for information, the Women Make History Project shows that the library can be seen instead as a site of activity, which connects to women in the wider community. GWL has tangibly stepped outside the parameters of the library walls to reach out to women.



*Illustration 7 – Picture of the ‘Hidden Gems of Garnethill Heritage Walk’ (April 2010)  
(Courtesy of Glasgow Women’s Library)*

Smallwood argues that community programs such as the Women Make History Project “are designed to educate, entertain and enrich the lives of the participants”<sup>35</sup> and provide individuals with information about women throughout history, who they may have never heard about. Interestingly, on the Glasgow Necropolis Women’s Heritage Walk, many of the headstones on women’s graves acknowledge only the women’s roles as wives and daughters rather than their own contributions to Scottish society through education, employment or vocation. As the Glasgow Necropolis Women’s Heritage Walk leaflet points out there are only three historical women represented by statues in the city of Glasgow. These are Queen Victoria, Isabella Elder, a philanthropist who promoted higher education for women in Scotland, and Dolores Ibarruri, a heroine in the Spanish Republican and Communist movements. There are a few women remembered in tombs or urns, such as the Misses Buchanan of Bellfield, three heroines of Victorian Glasgow who donated large sums of money to many institutions in Glasgow and Corinda Lee, the Queen of the Gypsies who allegedly read the palm of Queen

<sup>35</sup> Meryle Leonard, “Si Se Puede!/Yes We Can!,” in *Librarians as Community Partners: An Outreach Handbook*, ed. Carol Smallwood (Chicago: American Library Association, 2010), 35.



Victoria when she visited Glasgow. For a city the size of Glasgow to only have three statues of women and a few tombs and urns is shocking and links back to the invisibility of women's wider cultural and social contributions to Scottish society.

However, the research undertaken to collate and make up each Women's History Walking Tour involved a thorough investigation of historical texts and in the process uncovered women's hidden histories, which were brought to life during the creation of the tours. This challenges the view that only three women were 'important enough' to be given statues and instead supports the idea that women have been overlooked and now deserve due attention and respect.

Podcasts of the West End walking tour are now available in English, French and German from the GWL website. Having podcasts in other languages acknowledges the European community of women's libraries and the importance of sharing local knowledge with women across Europe. As discussed previously, Glasgow has a culturally diverse population and therefore having the podcasts in French and German means that visitors and residents alike can listen and enjoy the walking tour. It also means that for women with mobility or health issues who cannot join in on the walk, the podcast can be listened to at home or in a car. These considerations show GWL's role in the community, widening the availability of their activities to more women and in the process promoting inclusion and diversity.

Having the podcasts available to purchase on the internet also means that for teachers of gender studies, there are online resources for their students. As Westbrook makes clear, "interdisciplinary fields such as women's studies are considered high-scatter fields in that a wide array of resources are frequently needed to gather relevant information".<sup>36</sup> Resources such as podcasts from local walking tours may be invaluable for researchers who wish to connect with the lives of women. Payne argues that currently higher education is being transformed by "the increased use of technology in learning".<sup>37</sup> This rapidly changing educational environment poses new challenges for teachers of gender studies. GWL's presence on the internet through their informative website, podcasts, Twitter and Facebook accounts and community outreach projects, challenges the view of a

<sup>36</sup> Lynn Westbrook, "Information Needs and Experiences of Scholars in Women's Studies: Problems and Solutions," *College and Research Libraries* (2003): 193.

<sup>37</sup> Phillip Payne, "A kaleidoscope of change: How library management can support the development of new learning environments," in *Developing the new learning environment: The changing role of the academic librarian*, ed. Phillipa Levy and Sue Roberts (London: Facet Publishing, 2005), 201.

library as a place you visit to borrow a book and instead shows its impressive ability to adapt and keep pace with new developments. Librarians' roles have changed "from custodians of knowledge to knowledge managers"<sup>38</sup> who enter into a dialogue with their service users.

Although it can be seen that there is a clear lack of monuments and statutes of women, the walking tours and podcasts make women of the past and present come to life and encourage reflections upon female Scottish identity and citizenship. In addition to the Women Make History Walking Tours, GWL has also sought to address the lack of representation of important women in public spaces through other initiatives which I will now go on to discuss further.

### *Mapping Memorials to Women in Scotland*

Cultural memory is rather embodied in objectifications which store meanings in a concentrated manner, meanings shared by a group of people ... They can also be monuments, such as buildings or statues, shared material signs, signals, symbols and allegories as storages of experience, memorabilia erected as reminders.<sup>39</sup>

GWL, Women's History Scotland and Girl-Guiding Scotland have collaborated to produce the Mapping Memorials Project, which aims to find and record memorials to women who have made an important contribution to Scottish society, history and culture. The project makes links between previous generations of women and invites members of the public to search for the women who have helped to build Scotland in their local communities. Memorials can take many forms, such as tombs, bridges, stained glass windows, war memorials, parks, cairns and stones, and people are invited to add to the map online and build a record of women's contributions to Scotland. As Aleida Assmann argues, "who makes his or her way into, and who remains outside the cultural memory? What are the principles of inclusion and exclusion? These questions are necessarily related to questions of acquiring and maintaining power; which means that a change in power relations will also produce a change in the structure

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<sup>38</sup> Phillip Payne, "A kaleidoscope of change: How library management can support the development of new learning environments," in *Developing the new learning environment: The changing role of the academic librarian*, ed. Phillipa Levy and Sue Roberts (London: Facet Publishing, 2005), 201.

<sup>39</sup> Agnes Heller, "Cultural Memory, Identity and Civil Society," *International Politics and Society* 2 (2002), [http://www.fes.de/ipg/ipg2\\_2001/artheller.htm](http://www.fes.de/ipg/ipg2_2001/artheller.htm).

of cultural memory.”<sup>40</sup> With advances in equality legislation, employment and education opportunities, there has also been a desire to acknowledge that many women have been forgotten in the cultural memory of Scotland and “memorial practices play a vital part in the construction of national identity”.<sup>41</sup>

Projects such as the Mapping Memorials Project allow gender studies students to actively reflect upon and take part in the process of knowledge creation and dissemination. If they come upon a memorial which has not already been documented on the website, they are able to upload the image and some information about the memorial, and this is recorded in a national database. Taking part in activities such as these allows students of gender studies to reflect upon the challenges in preserving and disseminating feminist knowledge and also the role of the internet in supporting this. Berger and Radeloff<sup>42</sup> discovered in their research on women’s and gender studies students in the United States that over 70 percent participate in national, local or campus organizations relating to gender equality. Many gender studies students seek to be active in their local communities and GWL can help encourage this through its projects and community outreach programs.

## Conclusion

With a wide variety of texts and sources of information available regarding Scottish women, donated by members of the public and feminist organizations, GWL has an important role to play in the creation, preservation and dissemination of feminist knowledge.

This article has highlighted the ways in which feminist knowledge has impacted and shaped the practices at GWL. From collection strategies, to the archival and classification systems, to projects such as Women Make History and the Mapping Memorials of Women in Scotland, the library has reflected feminist theory and research in its approach. As a storage facility for the experiences of women and a site of activity for members of walking tours, book groups and

<sup>40</sup> Aleida Assmann, “Plunging into nothingness’: The Politics of Cultural Memory,” in *Moment to Monument: The Making and Unmaking of Cultural Significance*, ed. Ladina Bezzola Lambert and Andrea Ochsner (London: Transaction Publishers, 2009): 35.

<sup>41</sup> Ladina Bezzola Lambert and Andrea Ochsner, introduction to *Moment to Monument: The Making and Unmaking of Cultural Significance*, ed. Ladina Bezzola Lambert and Andrea Ochsner (London: Transaction Publishers, 2009): 14.

<sup>42</sup> Michele Tracy Berger and Cheryl Radeloff, *Transforming Scholarship: Why Women’s and Gender Studies Students are Changing Themselves and the World* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

other projects, it acknowledges that cultural memory is linked to people, places and regularly repeated and repeatable practices. Women Make History Walking Tours involve researching women's cultural and historical contributions and then inscribing these on maps of local areas. These walks are repeatable practices and acknowledge the important role women have had in the construction of Scottish society. As long as women maintain and cultivate a common and shared cultural memory through these activities, they enhance the links between women in Scotland and promote a stronger sense of citizenship. Projects such as these have been at the forefront of discovering hidden histories, connecting local women and communities across Scotland, and in the process they have challenged mainstream cultural memories, creating new and exciting possibilities for the future.

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## BEYOND THE BUN-LADY: TOWARDS NEW FEMINIST FIGURATIONS OF LIBRARIANSHIP

Sanne Koevoets

### *Setting the scene:*

*Into the labyrinth (a memory)*

*It is 1999. I am 19 years old, and preparing to write my first academic paper: a feminist analysis of Peter Greenaway's 'The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover.' I'm not sure how I will do it, but I trust that the library will reveal what It All Means.*

*As I enter the building the smell of dusty volumes tingles in my eyes. I blink as I head for the section on 'Gender Studies' – I wrote down the exact stack numbers. They must be somewhere up these stairs. But the numbers on the third floor don't match up with those on the second floor! I run up and down the winding stairs. The books I need aren't there.*

*I feel stupid walking all the way down-down-down to the reference desk to ask a librarian. "These items can be found on the third floor," she tells me. I say "Thank you" and pretend I wasn't just there. I don't want to let on that I don't understand this place, that I am dizzied by the thought of the stacks caving in on me, that I want to get away from all of these books.*

*On the way back up I watch the numbers on the side of the stairwell carefully. Second floor... Fourth floor... I hear someone following me, quiet footsteps and a whisper: "Young lady! Young lady! The third floor can only be accessed from the other stairs!" Red-faced, I make my way through the fourth floor stacks, stumbling onto the mezzanine. I feel tricked. They should have called it the 'two-and-a-halfth floor'! All around me I can hear the rustling of pages. The books are taunting me.*

When I first presented the part of my research dealing with library narratives that present libraries as fearful, unreliable, and destabilizing spaces that undermine the user's sense of agency,<sup>1</sup> I was reminded by an attentive respondent that libraries and archives offer the potential of empowerment to marginalized subjects, and

<sup>1</sup> Sanne Koevoets, "The Terror of Babel: Gothic Engineering in Borges' *The Library of Babel*," presented at the NOG National Research Day, 9 March 2011.



that they indeed are experienced as either peaceful or exciting spaces by many researchers as well. However, narrative culture is rife with the trope of the uncanny library. Borges' short story "The Library of Babel" plays with this dream of a universal library – a dream that has consistently fascinated the European imaginary ever since the Ptolemies attempted to make it a reality in Alexandria. But Borges' dream quickly devolves into a nightmare when the corollary turns out to be that the Library of Babel contains "all that is given to express, in all languages".<sup>2</sup> Lacking any discernible order, the Library holds not only every copy of every work that has been or could be written in every possible language, but also "several hundred thousand imperfect facsimiles".<sup>3</sup> The Borgesian library is an inescapable *chaosmos* that has supplanted the universe, the secrets of which the librarians so desperately desire it to reveal. As the protagonist of Borges' story regretfully concludes: "The certitude that some shelf in some hexagon held precious books and that these precious books were inaccessible, seemed almost intolerable."<sup>4</sup>

Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* features a medieval proto-Sherlock as its protagonist. William of Baskerville, together with his young novice Adso of Melk, visit a Benedictine monastery shaken by a series of mysterious deaths that all seem to revolve around the Aedificium – the monastery's renowned library, modeled after the Libraries of Alexandria and Babel. In the library they indeed stumble upon the secret to the murders, but not after William, master of deduction, is forced to conclude that the truth does not reveal itself through knowledge that can be contained in books. The library is a labyrinth as complex as the labyrinth of language itself: each sign leads to a multitude of other signs - not one trajectory leads to a clear solution. Both the Library of Babel and the Aedificium are "trickster spaces"<sup>5</sup> that resist definitive signification. As one of the old monks of the monastery warns: "The library is a great labyrinth, sign of the labyrinth of the world. You enter and you do not know if you will come out."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, "The Library of Babel," in *Magic & Madness in the Library: Protagonists Among the Stacks*, ed. Eric Graeber (Delhi NY: Birch Brook Press, 1999), 78.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> The term "trickster space" refers to an in-between space that resists definition and boundaries, and suggests mixity and the suspension of signification. Libraries figure in literature and film as "trickster spaces" where the protagonist is consistently confronted with his or her doubles.

<sup>6</sup> Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1984), 186.



These narratives feature libraries as uncanny, transgressive and dangerous places. Once inside, the protagonists are inescapably caught in a web of intertextuality, dizzied by the ubiquity of books that seem to obfuscate rather than enlighten. In the literary canon, the library functions as a Gothic trope.<sup>7</sup> In both Borges' and Eco's narratives, librarians are tortured souls. They are men in dire search for meaning, for an answer, for a logical and reasonable solution to the puzzle posed by the labyrinth of language. From these narratives we can begin to understand the library as a patriarchal fantasy, dreamed up by "men of reason"<sup>8</sup> yearning for a system to catalogue all of human knowledge into one logical order that is entirely partial, and thus vulnerable to the chaotic interventions of the outside of reason – in both cases connoted as feminine.<sup>9</sup>

Is it any surprise, then, that narratives of library destruction are so appealing? As Graeber notes in the foreword of *Magic & Madness in the Library*: "As a means of destroying a library, an informal survey of literary works shows that defenestration and biblio-pyromania rank third and second. Right behind throwing books out of a window into a bonfire."<sup>10</sup> Simultaneously, images of library destruction elicit a strong sense of loss. As Raven writes in *Lost Libraries*: "When books burn, drown or are carted off as was booty, the images are often indelible."<sup>11</sup> The collective imaginary thus engages an oddly paradoxical obsession with the library: as bibliophiles we fantasize about its preservation, while at the same time being fascinated with maniacal fantasies of its destruction. The library serves as a rich cultural site to explore these tensions.

The profound sense of unease that libraries can elicit is not mere narrative conjecture or a cheap trick of horror cinema. First described by Mellon in 1986,<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed analysis of Gothic tropes in library narratives, see the chapter "Library Terror: Gothic engineering in library narratives", in: Sanne Koevoets, *Into the Labyrinth of Knowledge and Power: The library as a gendered space in the western imaginary*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, June 2013. <http://igitur-archive.library.uu.nl/dissertations/2013-0617-200601/UUindex.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge: 1993).

<sup>9</sup> In Borges, the monstrous feminine appears as the monstrous library and as a womb, whereas in Eco the monstrous feminine appears as a young girl who seduces a young novice and then appears to change into a still-warm beef heart.

<sup>10</sup> Eric Graeber, ed., introduction to *Magic & Madness in the Library: Protagonists Among the Stacks* (Delhi NY: Birch Brook Press: 1999), 11.

<sup>11</sup> James Raven, "The Resonances of Loss," in *Lost Libraries: The Destruction of Great Book Collections since Antiquity*, ed. James Raven (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 8.

<sup>12</sup> Constance Mellon, "Library anxiety: A grounded theory and its development." *College & Research Libraries* 47.2 (1986): 160–5.

“library anxiety” is a measurable phenomenon, uniquely tied to the library space, and not correlated to any other disorders on the anxiety spectrum.<sup>13</sup> Undergraduate students experience a range of feelings of anxiety when using or even contemplated using the academic library, ranging from a sense of being overwhelmed to helplessness and dread. Research suggests that library anxiety may stem from a sense of intimidation caused by the overwhelming size of the library, or the puzzling complexity of the library’s layout and the way materials are organized.<sup>14</sup>

In this light, it would seem fortunate that libraries are populated by people – often women – who are trained to help us find our way through the frustrating meshwork of a presumed order that does not seem to correlate with common sense. But here we run into two problems: firstly, we may wonder, alongside White, whether librarians may be becoming obsolete. New technologies and financial constraints are reducing libraries to collections of “storage bins”, while librarians are replaced by “online catalogues” and “robotic arms”.<sup>15</sup> Simultaneously, while most libraries still employ a staff of trained librarians, stereotypes of female librarians and perceptions of the library as a feminine space may be one of the *causes* of library anxiety.<sup>16</sup>

When Westbrook and DeDecker formulated a list of suggestions for academic libraries, aimed at maximizing user comfort and minimizing library anxiety, they suggested that: “Librarians have an obligation to break down any real or perceived barriers between themselves and the users they are committed to serve.”<sup>17</sup> But this puts the onus of ameliorating library anxiety on librarians.<sup>18</sup> Atlas argues that librarians fight an uphill battle; on the one hand against the prevalent negative stereotypes of librarians, and on the other hand against the lure of new technologies – students are as scared of librarians as they are distracted by new technologies.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Qun G. Jiao, Anthony J. Owuegbuzie, and Sharon L. Bostick, “Is Library Anxiety Important?,” *Library Review* 48.6 (1999).

<sup>14</sup> Heather Carlisle, “The implications of library anxiety for academic reference services: A review of the literature,” *Australian Academic & Research Libraries* 38.2 (2007): 133.

<sup>15</sup> Fred D. White, “Libraries Lost: Storage Bins and Robotic Arms,” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 52.6 (2005).

<sup>16</sup> Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie, Qun G. Jiao, and Sharon L. Bostick, *Library Anxiety: Theory, Research, and Applications* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2004): 34–5.

<sup>17</sup> Lynn Westbrook and Sharon DeDecker, “Supporting User Needs and Skills to Minimize Library Anxiety: Considerations for Academic Libraries,” *The Reference Librarian* 40 (1993): 44.

<sup>18</sup> Michael C. Atlas, “Library Anxiety in the Electronic Era, or Why Won’t Anybody Talk to Me Anymore? One Librarian’s Rant,” *Reference and User Services Quarterly* 44.4 (2005).

<sup>19</sup> Michael C. Atlas, “Library Anxiety in the Electronic Era, or Why Won’t Anybody Talk to Me Anymore? One Librarian’s Rant,” *Reference and User Services quarterly* 44.4 (2005): 314.

It is indeed true that librarians in the United States have been fighting against the stereotype at least since 1909, when librarian Helen Rex Keller complained that librarians were stereotyped as either “old, fogey bookworms”<sup>20</sup> or as disproportionately attractive and efficient. “Both types must go down before the downtrodden, average, ordinary, *human* librarian can have a fair chance.”<sup>21</sup> The stereotype of the female librarian, anno 2013, seems to speak as much to the European imagination, if the popularity of narratives figuring the stern, unimaginative, and often overly bureaucratic “bun lady”, or the unhinged, hypersexual “sexy librarian” are any indication. Therefore I would suggest the need for *both* an investigation and deconstruction of the enduring stereotype of the female librarian, *and* a consideration of the possibilities to formulate new figurations of librarianship more in tune with the transformations that libraries are facing today.

In the following sections I will offer six short scenes that may begin to sketch out what such a project would look like. I will offer a short analysis of each scene, connecting it to current theoretical debates on power, knowledge and gender. These analyses are but starting points, and the examples may be used to invite students to further investigate the stereotype of the female librarian and unpack the anxiety elicited by library spaces.

### *The stereotype of the female librarian*

In this section I will explore the stereotype of the female librarian as it appears throughout a range of popular cultural texts. These examples highlight the ubiquity of a stereotype that is widely recognizable, and that is part of a complex representational framework. I will draw on Stuart Hall’s insight that: “Stereotypes get hold of a few simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized characteristics about a person; reduce everything about the person to those traits; exaggerate and simplify them, and fix them without change or development to eternity.”<sup>22</sup> However, as I will show, the stereotype of the female librarian should be understood in relation to the feelings of discomfort elicited by the library space, as a mediation of these feelings of dread, and as the metaphorical ‘canary in the

<sup>20</sup> Rosalee McReynolds, “A Heritage Dismissed,” *Library Journal* 1 (1985): 25.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997), 258.

mineshaft' of the epistemic problems posed by the library space. As I will show, the stereotype of the female librarian mediates the discomfort brought about by the fact that the library space is haunted by the repressed other of rationality - be it repressed memories or trauma, the often invisible operations of authoritative power, or the erasure of the body and sexuality from spaces of reason.

### *Scene 1: The Library Policeman*

*"Sam had gone by the Library hundreds of times during his years in Junction City, but this was the first time he had really looked at it, and he discovered a rather amazing thing: he hated the place on sight. [...] He didn't like it; it made him uneasy; he didn't know why."*<sup>23</sup>

Stephen King is known as the master of modern American Gothic horror, and *The Library Policeman* stands as an at times hilarious, at others terrifying document to the fears projected onto the library space in general, and the female librarian in particular. King's library is from the offset a profoundly *uncanny* space: at once familiar and creepy, the Junction City public library serves in the story as the site of repressed memories that come back to haunt the protagonist in the form of Ardelia Lortz: a succubus-librarian who feeds on the fear of children, who shape-shifts between the stereotypical bun-lady and the Library Policeman. In the case of Sam, the main character of the novella, the Library Policeman appears as the man who raped him when he was a boy on his way to return late books to the library. In the end, he manages to kill the beast only after he revisits this repressed memory and faces the trauma he endured.

In King's novella (printed as part of the collection *Four Past Midnight*), inspired by King's son's library anxiety, the figure of the stereotypical librarian serves as a reflective surface onto which cultural anxieties surrounding sexuality, trauma and memory are projected. While the story is horrific to an extent that verges on camp, it mobilizes the widely felt discomfort that library spaces elicit. As Derrida argued, archives – and, by extension, libraries – are marked by the tension between the death drive and the pleasure principle, or more concretely: the tendency to want to preserve the historical record as well as the tendency to

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<sup>23</sup> Stephen King, *Four Past Midnight 3: The Library Policeman*. (New York: Viking Press: 1990). [http://www.en8848.com.cn/fiction/Fiction/Horror/2005-05-19/747\\_3.html](http://www.en8848.com.cn/fiction/Fiction/Horror/2005-05-19/747_3.html) (accessed 9 October 2012).

‘forget’ those parts of the past that somehow do not fit into current frameworks.<sup>24</sup> Archives and libraries are thus always haunted by the lingering presence of that which they are supposed to exclude or repress.

Derrida argued that archives are complicit with political control: “[T]here is no political power without control of the archive, if not memory.”<sup>25</sup> Although this horror story belongs in the realm of what is considered ‘popular culture’, it may be read parallel to Stoler’s *Along the Archival Grain*, in which she traces the way Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia was founded on archival control.<sup>26</sup> Reading for the presence of the repressed within the archive or library reveals the uncanniness of the archive: that which seems at first sight familiar and banal is revealed to be permeated by the presence of the other. Stoler’s work epitomizes Derrida’s claim that archivization “*produces* as much as it *records* the event”.<sup>27</sup> It is through the process of archivization that the Dutch colonial ruler could produce the colonized as other – a worldview that sustains and makes possible the colonial logic by which the repression of the Indonesians could be produced as a just and natural order. Stoler’s work reminds us of how archives and libraries are marked by the presence of the repressed other.

The intimidation that Sam experiences upon entering the library can thus be read in two ways: on the one hand, the space reminds Sam of the sophisticated dynamics of control that permeate the environment, for instance through signs reminding users to be quiet, to return books on time, and to fear the Library Policeman. Entering the library requires self-discipline and the internalization of rational subjectivity. On the other hand, the space is haunted by Sam’s own repressed memories of the violence of sexuality and domination.

King thus takes Derrida’s notion of the haunted archive literally. When the repressed returns in the form of Ardelia Lortz, the library transforms into a literal house of horrors: the librarian’s sexuality is monstrous, ravenous and unconstrained. King’s monstrous librarian is such an effective figure because she signifies the dissolution of the boundaries between self and the Other, order and

<sup>24</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., note 1.

<sup>26</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009).

<sup>27</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 17.

chaos, and the present and the past. As such she is a warning: if we allow the library space to become unconstrained, chaos and destruction will ensue.

As the Radfords argue, behind the stereotype “lies a cultural text that library practitioners have been at a loss to rewrite”.<sup>28</sup> While not all representations of the stereotypical female librarian are as horrific as Ardelia, in many cases they can be recognized as mediating a profound sense of unease elicited by the excessiveness and repressiveness of the library. This is why any attempt to neutralize the stereotype must start with an engagement with the sources of these anxieties.

### *Scene 2: Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones*



*Illustration 8 - Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones (2002).  
‘If an item does not appear in our records, it doesn’t exist.’*

In *Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones* (2002) the young Obi-Wan Kenobi visits the Jedi Archives in search of the location of the Kamino star system. Vertical glowing lights suggest ‘virtual’ records, which are accessed through a computer terminal, suggesting that the library is a simulacrum of 19th century monumental libraries, modeled after churches or cathedrals,<sup>29</sup> serving as a monument to the ideal of ubiquitous knowledge. Similarly, the librarian appears as a nod to a

<sup>28</sup> Marie L. Radford and Gary P. Radford, “Power, Knowledge, and Fear: Feminism, Foucault, and the Stereotype of the Female Librarian,” *Library Quarterly* 67.3 (1997): 254.

<sup>29</sup> Monumental libraries are often modeled after churches or cathedrals, for instance to signify the sanctity of the knowledge of a certain culture. Church-like libraries can be understood to convey cultural superiority. Cf. Chris Hart, Manmohan Bains, and Kathryn Jones, “The myth of material knowledge: reading the image of library buildings,” *New Library World* 97.3 (1996): 23–31.



long-gone past: She wears her gray hair in a bun, looks at Obi-Wan with piercing eyes, her kimono-like robes are unadorned and practical, and she is apparently as thoroughly bureaucratic as the stereotypical 'bun lady'. When Obi-Wan's search yields no results, Jocasta Nu remarks with a disdainful nod that "if an item does not appear in our records, it does not exist".

Why is it that the stereotype of the female librarian remains almost entirely untouched in the imaginary future of *Star Wars*? The Radfords' poststructuralist feminist analysis of the stereotype of the female librarian offers an interesting route towards the analysis of this particular appearance of the bun lady. They argue that the stereotype of the female librarian serves to mediate the epistemic anxieties stemming from the power/knowledge nexus that shapes the library experience. They follow Ophir's notion of the library as a "space of knowledge" instead of a social space<sup>30</sup> by arguing that: "Libraries are segregated places of intellectual activity, in which discursive subjects are constituted, objects are posited, and both are reproduced according to the logic and power relations of a specialized discourse. (...) However, like science, the edifice of order and rationality embodied by the library resides in a constant tension with those domains that lie outside of and are uncaptured by its rigorously defined borders."<sup>31</sup> Fascinatingly, the star system of Kamino is where, in the Star Wars universe, clones are produced. These inhuman, monstrous and unconstrained doubles challenge the traditional notion of the unique and unified subject. Jocasta Nu's role is thus not to service Obi Wan in his search, but to protect the *order of things* from interference by the constitutive outside of rationality.

However, the stereotype manages fear in a more profound sense as well. As the Radfords suggest: "This fear is not a fear of libraries or librarians per se (...), but a more fundamental fear of *discourse* and the dangers that *uncontrolled discourse* may give rise to."<sup>32</sup> The Radfords draw on Foucault's *The Discourse on Language* to argue that this fear is twofold: firstly, it is based in the realization that discourse is transitory and is destined for oblivion. Secondly, it stems from the fearful realization that discourse has unimaginable powers that are barely contained by the

<sup>30</sup> Adi Ophir, "A Place of Knowledge Re-created: The Library of Michel de Montaigne," *Science in Context* 4 (1991): 164, cited in Marie L. Radford and Gary P. Radford, "Power, Knowledge, and Fear: Feminism, Foucault, and the Stereotype of the Female Librarian," *Library Quarterly* 67.3 (1997): 255.

<sup>31</sup> Marie L. Radford and Gary P. Radford, "Power, Knowledge, and Fear: Feminism, Foucault, and the Stereotype of the Female Librarian," *Library Quarterly* 67.3 (1997), 255.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.



everyday humdrum activities of ordering. The stereotype of the female librarian is a mediation of these fears: her total subservience to the domain of rational knowledge signals that discourse is within the established order of things.<sup>33</sup>

The question remains, of course, why the stereotype of the librarian is always a woman.<sup>34</sup> At the individual and institutional levels,<sup>35</sup> the gendered stereotype can be traced back to the feminization of the library profession that began in the late 19th century in the United States, when Melville Dewey opened his library college to women.<sup>36</sup> While this opened a new professional domain to women, Van Slyck points out that those women were confined to low-income, low-prestige positions within the “highly gendered library hierarchy”.<sup>37</sup> The stereotype of the female librarian can thus be argued to be sexist, ageist and classist: the mostly lower-middle class women working at libraries could not afford to dress fashionably, and since married women were expected to give up their professional careers, experienced library workers tended to be ‘old maids’.

However, social and historical context alone do not explain why the stereotype of the female librarian has such a strong grip on the collective imaginary; nor does it explain what cultural work these stereotypical representations *do*. The Radfords offer a starting point for such an analysis, by suggesting that the female librarian manages the fear of discourse by dismantling the force of the power/knowledge nexus through traditional associations of women with “domesticity, emotionality, nurturance and the like”.<sup>38</sup> These are exactly the qualities that are excluded from the library as the domain of rationality. The female librarian has shed in her appearance and behavior all references to her femininity, and is thus a symbol of subservience to the ideal of universal, disembodied reason. This ideal

<sup>33</sup> Marie L. Radford and Gary P. Radford, “Power, Knowledge, and Fear: Feminism, Foucault, and the Stereotype of the Female Librarian,” *Library Quarterly* 67.3 (1997), 261.

<sup>34</sup> Indeed, while quite a few narratives feature male librarians, there is no established *stereotype* of male librarianship.

<sup>35</sup> I am referring to Sandra Harding’s analysis of gender differences as operating on three levels: the individual, social and institutional structures, and the symbolic. Cf. Susan Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986).

<sup>36</sup> Tawny Sverdlin, “The Feminization of Librarianship,” *Dispatches From Library School*, LibGig LLC, 9–22 (2008). <http://www.libgig.com/history/gender>. (accessed 19 August 2012).

<sup>37</sup> Abigail van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries and American Culture, 1890–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

<sup>38</sup> Dennis K. Mumby, “Feminism and the Critique of Organizational Communication Studies,” *Communication Yearbook* 16, ed. Stanley A. Deetz (Newbury Park: Sage, 1993), 157 cited in: Marie L. Radford and Gary P. Radford, “Power, Knowledge, and Fear: Feminism, Foucault, and the Stereotype of the Female Librarian,” 262.

is, as Genevieve Lloyd has argued, itself a gendered concept – connoted as male; early modernism gave rise to the character ideal of the Man of Reason. Lloyd argues that since rationality requires the type of intellectual training from which women were traditionally excluded, the character ideal of the Man of Reason empirically came to exclude women, but also became part of the symbolic connotation of reason as the domain of men.<sup>39</sup> Jocasta Nu can be understood to signal the problematic presence of women in spaces of reason. Unquestioningly faithful to the ideal of disembodied rationality, she is a fierce protector of the library as that vacuous space from which the disembodied Eye/I of knowledge conjures its universalizing perspective, and from which she, as a woman, is herself excluded.<sup>40</sup> She is a woman stripped of her location and situatedness, a no-one residing in the no-where of rationality.

### *Scene 3: Threesome*

So far I have explored one of the two poles of the librarian stereotype: the old foggy bookworm that is so prevalent throughout popular culture. But the stereotype of the sexy librarian is almost as prevalent. It is tempting to view the sexy librarian as the antithesis to the stereotype of the mousy bun lady. However, when investigating the symbolic work both images do, it becomes clear that both rely on the connotation of femininity with the realm of the body, and that both belong to the same sexual economy. Indeed, the sexy librarian is not so much an antithesis to the patriarchal stereotype of the bun lady, as it is a reminder that attempts to combat the latter by inserting the former only serve to commoditize femininity and alienate women from their power as living, loving, laboring creatures.<sup>41</sup>

If the stereotype of the female librarian signals an enforcement of the eradication of embodied, located femininity from the domain of reason, the antithesis of the stereotype would thus instead welcome and celebrate the presence of chaotic bodily (and affective) interventions in the library space.

<sup>39</sup> Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>40</sup> I am referring here to what Donna Haraway calls the “God-trick” of science, which involves the representation of knowledge as seeing everything from nowhere. Cf. Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* 14.3 (1988): 575–599.

<sup>41</sup> Laurie Penny as cited in: “The Feministing Five: Laurie Penny,” *Feministing Blog*, posted 6 October 2012, <http://feministing.com/2012/10/06/the-feministing-five-laurie-penny/> (accessed 11 October 2012). From her book: *Meat Market: Female Flesh Under Capitalism* (Blue Ridge Summit: O books, 2012).



Illustration 9 - GOLLY! I love big words!

Alex, one of the protagonists in the 1994 teen comedy/drama film *Threesome* does just that. In the library scene, Alex finds the object of her desire, Eddy, in the college library. As she seductively climbs onto the desk where Eddy is studying, she asks him to read to her. Reluctantly, Eddy begins to recite from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. As Eddy reads, Alex writhes around on the desk, climaxing as Eddy reaches the words "virgin zone". "GOLLY!" Alex sighs: "I love big words!" At the edge of the screen an elderly librarian secretly looks on without intervening.

What sets Alex apart from representations of 'sexy librarians' is that her pleasure does not sustain the patriarchal distinction between the library as a male space of rationality and the female body as an object of desire to be eradicated from the space or constrained by disciplinary power. Alex's *jouissance* can be read as a rebellious discursive intervention: as Hawthorne's novel on the mystery of feminine desire is read to her, she enacts and reclaims this mystery as pleasure. Her pleasure is a kind of excessive, jubilant knowledge that does not lend itself to being ordered or constrained in terms of patriarchal categorizations. It involves a fantasia, a creative way of relating anew to texts, of affirming the affective, rather than the rational, connections between bodies and knowledges.

The librarian is a problematic figure, as she serves as a reminder of how the domain of the body is traditionally excluded from the domain of reason. Alex's pleasure is so disruptive that it completely incapacitates the librarian's control of the space. The central question the scene raises is whether there exist spaces from where to re-envision the ways libraries structure the relationship between power, knowledge and subjectivity in a way that is radically embodied, located and situated? Now that libraries are becoming increasingly virtual, these questions arise next to renewed anxieties pertaining to the feared uncontrollability of informa-

tion. As new forms of control emerge, sustained by new technologies,<sup>42</sup> can real and virtual libraries offer new possibilities for connectivity and resistance that go beyond the paradigms of order and control? New figurations of situated librarian practices suggest that new media technologies have not only produced the possibility to think about libraries without books, but also new ways of imagining librarianship.



*Illustration 10 - Oh my... The bun lady looks on*

### *New (feminist) figurations of librarianship*

In this section I will offer three examples of what new figurations of librarianship may look like. All three examples in some way transgress the boundaries between male and female, ratio and affect, and the material and the virtual, and engage explicitly with questions concerning power and knowledge. As such they may serve as starting points for imagining librarianship beyond the bun lady. A feminist figuration of librarianship does not merely serve the purpose of countering the pervasive sexist stereotype of the female librarian, but also offers ways out of the old schemes of thought pertaining to gender and knowledge that are based on the patriarchal conception of god-trick rationality.

I borrow the term ‘figuration’ from the work of Braidotti, who in turn has borrowed it from Haraway. A figuration, writes Braidotti, “is a politically informed account of an alternative subjectivity” that “evokes or expresses ways

<sup>42</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” *October* 59.4 (1992).

out of the phallogentric vision of the subject”.<sup>43</sup> One of the most influential feminist figurations in feminist theory can be traced back to Haraway’s figuration of the cyborgs, which served to reimagine posthuman subjectivity as radically situated, fundamentally intertwined with technology, and produced through networked relations.<sup>44</sup>

In the following three scenes, I introduce three propositions for figuring librarianship that can be used as a starting point for class discussion, as points of departure for the scholarly investigation of the collective imaginary, *and* as mimetic devices with which to disarm pervasive sexist stereotypes.

#### *Scene 4: The Cyborg Librarian*

*“the academic librarian is a ‘human-machine,’ a physical being engaging in meaningful human interactions with students while simultaneously a machine, navigating a network of hypertext discourses, unearthing research sources through online indexes and commercial search engines, and retrieving fragments of information from such disparate sources as reference books, websites, and other human beings. At each step of the research process, the librarian utilizes his or her own judgment and experiences, as well as tools/machines, in order to guide students. [...] The boundaries between librarian, student, and the infinite supply of information suddenly explode in the reference interaction.”*<sup>45</sup>

Yoder’s figuration of the cyborg librarian as *interface* offers an interesting new paradigm for library work, where interaction between human and non-human actors on a technologized network comes to define what librarianship entails. The cyborg librarian is a guide who helps users to navigate the complex web of material and digital records, rather than focusing on the preservation of order. The cyborg librarian is thus a radically entangled, situated, and embodied figure, and as such stands in stark contrast to the librarians figured in *The Library Policeman*, *Star Wars II* and *Threesome*. Rather than suggesting that technology is somehow overtaking or supplanting the human dimension of memory, the cyborg librarian

<sup>43</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 1.

<sup>44</sup> Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149–81.

<sup>45</sup> Amanda R. Yoder, “The Cyborg Librarian as Interface: Interpreting Postmodern Discourse on Knowledge Construction, Validation, and Navigation within Academic Libraries,” *Libraries and the Academy*. 3.3 (2003): 389.

as interface suggests that technology and humanity are interwoven in the creation of new knowledge communities.

Notably, the monstrous librarian in *The Library Policeman* is monstrous exactly because she figures the uncanny dissolution of boundaries between past and present, between order and madness, and between life and death. Yoder's cyborg librarian, however, weaves between these realms with ease. In contrast to Manoff, who has written extensively on the challenges posed by the digitalization and virtualization of the historical and cultural record, Yoder's vision is utopian to a fault. For Yoder, the blurring of the boundaries between the librarian, the user, and the "infinite supply of information"<sup>46</sup> radically changes the way knowledge is produced through processes of digital archivization. This re-envisioning also seems to involve the detachment of librarianship from essentialist notions of subservient femininity, although Yoder does not formulate this explicitly; nor does she explicitly engage the challenges posed by the hybridity, mutability, and multiplicity of the digital record.<sup>47</sup> Manoff perceives that electronic library collections face the erosion of the boundaries between the library space and the interventions of the capitalist marketplace.<sup>48</sup> Boundary blurring is thus not liberating in and of itself. Nevertheless, Yoder's figuration of the cyborg librarian may serve as a starting point for formulating the political relevance of the types of 'boundary work' librarians engage in on a day to day basis.

### *Scene 5: Ms Woman of the Year 2003*

*"Are you sure? Me? A librarian?" That was Carla Diane Hayden's reaction when she learned she'd been named one of Ms.'s Women of the Year. It's not that she's unaware of the importance of her work as president of the American Library Association (ALA)—with 45,000 branches, it is the most powerful library association in the world. But it's unusual, she says, to be noticed for it.*<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Amanda R. Yoder, "The Cyborg Librarian as Interface: Interpreting Postmodern Discourse on Knowledge Construction, Validation, and Navigation within Academic Libraries," *Libraries and the Academy* 3.3 (2003): 389.

<sup>47</sup> Marlene Manoff, "Hybridity, Mutability, Multiplicity: Theorizing Electronic Library Collections," *Library Trends* 49.1 (2000).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Catherine Orenstein, "Women of the Year 2003: Carla Diane Hayden," *Ms. Magazine* December (2003), [http://www.ms magazine.com/dec03/woty2003\\_hayden.asp](http://www.ms magazine.com/dec03/woty2003_hayden.asp).

In 2003 Carla Diane Hayden became one of Ms. Magazine's Women of the Year. She was awarded this title for her efforts to protect library patrons' privacy after the FBI had attempted to gain access to the lending records of all library users under the PATRIOT Act. Hayden's campaign mobilized a multitude of on- and offline networks to change the law. Hayden argued that: "When libraries fight against the PATRIOT Act, or against [mandatory Internet filters], we're fighting for the public. Most of the people who use public libraries don't have the opportunity to buy books at a bookstore or on Amazon.com. What the library does is protect the rights of all people to fully and freely access information and to pursue knowledge, without fear of repercussion."<sup>50</sup>

Hayden reformulates library work in terms that are diametrically opposed to the way library work is represented through the stereotype of the female librarian. Rather than sustaining the disciplinary power of the library, librarians in Hayden's vision should work to protect library users from the complicated operations of networked control that threaten their privacy and may hamper their social and intellectual mobility. Hayden's activist vision of librarianship is an ironic and inspiring contradiction of Dewey's idea that women are exceptionally suited for library work, since they do not cause problems. Of course, Hayden may be a singular and exceptional example of forward-looking librarianship, but the steady flow of practitioner perspectives from digitized libraries (some examples of which can be found in this volume) suggests otherwise.

### *Scene 6: Librotraficante*

*"We profess Quantum Demographics which embraces deep links between cultures that seem disparate at first glance. We want and need to study our own history so that we can then study other histories more fully. We do not strive to exclude others from our history or to deny others their history. We strive for the day when we all know our own stories to such an extent that we can see the links and bridges to the stories of others."*<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Catherine Orenstein, "Women of the Year 2003: Carla Diane Hayden," *Ms. Magazine* December (2003), [http://www.msmagazine.com/dec03/woty2003\\_hayden.asp](http://www.msmagazine.com/dec03/woty2003_hayden.asp).

<sup>51</sup> N.N., "The Librotraficante Manifesto." Librotraficante, last modified on 21 September 2012, <http://librotraficante.com/index.php/present/manifesto>.



The Librotraficantes are a collective that produces travelling libraries. Organized in response to the Arizona House Bill 2281 (2012) that prohibits courses on Mexican American Studies to be taught at Arizona high schools, and called for the removal of books on Mexican American and Chicano literature, history and theory from school libraries in the state, the Librotraficantes published a manifesto on their website, formulating ten points of attention, of which the one above is the fifth.

The Librotraficantes take the politics of library work as their starting point, stating that everyone should have access to the knowledge of his or her community, should be allowed to engage with such works freely within a communal setting, in order to learn to recognize the links and bridges between different cultures.

The Librotraficantes evoke Braidotti's figuration of the nomadic subject, rather than Haraway's figuration of the cyborg. To make the content of the 'forbidden' texts available to students, it would have sufficed to simply make them available digitally. Indeed, as the internet takes over the function of the library as information portal, 'libraries' without books are becoming more common. However, the movement highlights the library's function as a social space. The Librotraficante movement is *literally* nomadic, as it travels across the United States and opens (temporary) underground libraries where they are needed. But they are also nomadic in a profound sense: radically unfaithful to any position of power. Librotraficantes are committed to a radical plurality, held together by affective connections to people, histories, and stories. Librotraficantes are a multi-ethnic, multi-gendered, multimedia collective sustained by temporary affiliations, endowed with the mobility to change shape and direction as needed.

The Librotraficantes are a young movement, and it remains to be seen what, exactly, its effect will be and to what extent it will prove a productive antidote to the oppressive forces of dominant discourse and technologized mechanisms of control. The fluidity and mobility of the movement means that at the time of the printing of this book, it may already have disbanded. But for now the powerful voices of hope it embodies offer a fascinating vision of the future of libraries that lies ahead: not confined to being a strictly disciplinarian domain of reason, the underground libraries of the Librotraficantes show libraries as lively social spaces where old connections can be (re)discovered and new connections can be forged; where the need for information meets the love of books; and where new utopias emerge from communities of situated readers.

## *Teaching gender with libraries and archives: The power of information*

In this article I have offered six scenes that highlight how libraries and librarianship are as much products of the cultural imaginary as they are produced through practices. How we imagine libraries, what we expect them to do, and how we are affected by the limitations and potential of spaces of knowledge and memory depends not only on the extent to which these spaces manage and order knowledge, but also on what we imagine to be the fundamental fabric of knowledge. To claim that knowledge itself is a product of the cultural imaginary has important repercussions for gender studies teaching. As I have demonstrated in the above, an examination of the cultural representation of feminized professions can provide a compelling illustration of the important and often seemingly abstract tenets of feminist critiques of knowledge. Students should be invited to reflect on the power of stereotypes beyond a mere consideration of their immediately evident sexist roots, and to engage with the way in which such stereotypes relate to the way representation not only reflects, but also produces power relations. Moreover, students should be encouraged to reflect on the way representation functions in relation to knowledge production.

Haraway's point of departure—that we live inside of stories, and the objects that make up the world are frozen stories<sup>52</sup>—should be made to resonate with students of gender studies. As the new generation of feminist activists, scholars, and professionals, students of gender studies face the multiple challenges of reflecting critically on the stories scientists and scholars have been telling, on the status of the objects they are telling stories about, and on how they may tell such stories differently. These are all political activities that take place within material conditions as well as narrative traditions, and libraries and archives, as the articles in this volume show, play a seminal role in the political practices of knowledge production. Our stories about the world require us to formulate not only objects, but also embodied subjects of knowledge practices. Teaching gender studies should not stop at teaching students how to navigate library spaces, or how to locate and analyze archival materials, but also inspire them to produce situated perspectives out of their findings. An analysis of the stories we tell about librarians, as well as

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<sup>52</sup> Donna Haraway and Thyra Nichols Goodeve, *How Like a Leaf* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

the stories we can formulate out of archival materials, engage not only political, but also epistemological reflection.

My alternative stories about librarianship have been informed by the contributions in this volume, and in turn should be read as an additional perspective on how the power of information can be taught in gender studies classes, and how students can be inspired to engage with this issue. Some of the contributions will resonate directly with students. For instance, De Jong and Wieringa show how librarianship is being re-imagined by information specialists—whether we speak about information specialists, knowledge brokers, stereotypical librarians or *librotraficantes* fundamentally has to do with the way new technologies engage different ways of relating to the world of knowledge. Bogadottir's and Baidar & Zobnina's contributions make concrete the feminist discussion on the politics of location and situated knowledges. To consider how particular social, historical, institutional and cultural locations define and complicate access to the monuments and the documents from which new stories may emerge should be part and parcel of gender studies teaching.

Other articles provide concrete examples of class activities. Aleksander, De Jong, Meulmeester & Vriend, and Perry all reflect on how questions pertaining to the politics of information can be translated into classroom activities that drive students to engage with archives on different levels. They provide concrete suggestions for class activities that engage library spaces and archival collections in different academic settings, ranging from under- and postgraduate gender studies classes to language instruction.

Because students of gender studies are expected to contribute (through their academic work, as well as their current and future professions) to the empowerment of women, some of the articles address explicitly how the development of special libraries and archives has contributed and continues to contribute to this agenda. Radiccioni and Virtú show how the documentation of feminist activist legacies was an integral strategy to implement political agendas. Claeys' case study illustrates that information can be used as a strategic tool for the empowerment of women in the Maghreb and Mashreq countries. Maxwell adds to these perspectives by considering how the Glasgow Women's Library has used feminist strategies to organize activities that go beyond documentation and dissemination by promoting a stronger sense of citizenship. Such texts can be read in gender studies classrooms to make students aware of the strong ties

between women's empowerment and the role of libraries, archives and documentation centers as spaces of lived social reality and feminist political activities.

Students of gender studies and information studies should be inspired to not only reflect on archives and libraries historically, empirically, and analytically, but also to take part in the utopian, mimetic project of reimagining librarianship from a feminist perspective. But the relevance of this volume also extends beyond gender studies classrooms. Students and practitioners in the field of information science may find many of the insights in this volume a useful starting point to reflect on the gendered dynamics of their field, and may be inspired to further investigate on them from within their particular institution or discipline.

The contributions in this volume provide a kind of panorama of the complex intertwining of feminist issues at the levels of knowledge production, knowledge transference, representation, and empowerment. Its overarching argument is that gender studies teaching should actively engage with the practices of the preservation and dissemination of materials pertaining to gender issues. Gender studies did not develop out of nowhere, and libraries and archives do not merely or unproblematically function as storehouses of its intellectual productions. They are not the immediately transparent windows to the world of knowledge that they are sometimes taken to be. When gender studies students are asked to reflect on their field, they may find that a critical reflection on the power of information and the practices of preserving and disseminating this information provides an invaluable point of entrance. With this volume, we provide teachers with a multitude of perspectives from which to engage such a reflection.

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## ANNEX

*This list was compiled by Shosha Niesen with the support of Tilly Vriend (Atria, Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History) and Maria Grönroos (WINE, KILDEN).*

The list below is meant as a tool to guide researchers, students, and others seeking information on gender and women's studies topics, towards useful sources across the European Union. It provides an additional point of reference to the already existing lists created by Atria, Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History, and the Women's Information Network of Europe (WINE), to which this list is also greatly indebted.

The list does not by any means claim to be complete or final. Libraries and archives are always in motion, and our understanding of what a library or archive should be, is changing. Also, they are unevenly distributed across Europe. The kaleidoscopic nature of the list is thus, in a way, representative of the field as a whole. The descriptions of the organizations are generally taken from the respective websites. In countries where there is a (relative) wealth of choice, we consciously chose to leave out university libraries with Gender sections. In cases where there were a limited number of independent libraries and archives, we decided to include 'general' Gender Institutes by way of a starting point. In order to facilitate navigation of the list, organizations are listed alphabetically by country and categorized according to the type of organization, which is indicated by the letter A to E after the name of each organization:

Type of Organization	Symbol
Independent library/archive/information center	A
Section of national/municipal/university library/archive	B
NGO run library/archive/information center	C
Network of libraries, archives and information centers	D
Online lexicon/encyclopedia/bibliography	E



## Country lists<sup>1</sup>

Austria	<p>ArchFem (A)  <a href="http://altneu.han-solo.net/archfem/cmsmadesimple">http://altneu.han-solo.net/archfem/cmsmadesimple</a>  <i>Interdisciplinary Archive of Feminist Documentation/Archive for the Documentation of (Regional) Women's Movement History. Founded to make visible via archiving Women/Lesbian histories and Women/Lesbian politics the lives and works of Women/Lesbians.</i></p>
	<p>Ariadne (B)  <a href="http://www.onb.ac.at/cv/ariadne/about_ariadne.htm">www.onb.ac.at/cv/ariadne/about_ariadne.htm</a>  <i>Ariadne, center for information and documentation (part of the Austrian National Library), specializes in women's, feminist and gender issues. Main aims are to present the gender-specific literature in a database and to make the cultural heritage in the historical holdings of the Austrian National Library concerning women available. An online portal about the historical women's movement in Austria and partly of the Habsburg Monarchy offers digitized documents, periodicals and books, which are easy to use.</i></p>
	<p>Doku Graz -Association for Women's Documentation, Research &amp; Education (A)  <a href="http://doku.at/wordpress">http://doku.at/wordpress</a>  <i>DOKU Graz is an independent women's organization, operating in the fields of documentation, research and education. It houses a library and documentation center with approximately 5,500 items.</i></p>
	<p>AEP Frauenbibliothek (C)  <a href="http://www.aep.at/home.htm">www.aep.at/home.htm</a>  <i>Arbeitskreis Emanzipation und Partnerschaft is an autonomous women's organization. The AEP conducts educational training, and works to promote women's feminist policies.</i></p>
	<p>EfEU (C)  <a href="http://www.efeu.or.at/index.html">www.efeu.or.at/index.html</a>  <i>The EfEU is an independent feminist organization in Austria addressing the topics of gender and education. It aims to sensitize people (particularly teachers) to the problems of gender stereotyping and constructed sex roles taught within the educational system.</i></p>
	<p>Frauensolidarität (C)  <a href="http://www.frauensolidaritaet.org">www.frauensolidaritaet.org</a>  <i>Feminist organization engaged in raising public awareness of development issues and the situation of women in Africa, Asia, and South America.</i></p>
	<p>Frida (D)  <a href="http://www.frida.at">www.frida.at</a>  <i>The Austrian Network of Information and Documentation Centre for Women's Studies.</i></p>
	<p>OFRA Online Archiv Frauenpolitik (A)  <a href="http://www.ofra.at">www.ofra.at</a> Provides information, original documents, pictures and posters surrounding institutionalized women's policies.</p>
	<p>Sammlung Frauennachlässe (B)  <a href="http://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/sfn">www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/sfn</a>  <i>Goal is the systematic documentation and analysis of auto/biographical documents by women, couples, children &amp; relatives, friends and friends of women, and to organize these documents and make them accessible for scientific use.</i></p>

<sup>1</sup> We have chosen to follow the self-descriptions of the listed libraries and archives, as far as these were available.

Austria (cont'd)	<p>Stichwort Archives of the Women's &amp; Lesbians' Movement (A)  <a href="http://www.stichwort.or.at/english/frames-e/index-e.htm">www.stichwort.or.at/english/frames-e/index-e.htm</a>  <i>Political project of the autonomous women's and lesbians' movements that collects all kinds of documentation pertaining to the women's and lesbians' movements and provide access to a broad range of literature relevant to feminist research.</i></p>
Belgium	<p>Amazone (C)  <a href="http://www.amazone.be">www.amazone.be</a>  <i>Support-structure for the women's movement and resource center for gender equality.</i></p> <p>Bibliothèque Leonie La Fontaine (A)  <a href="http://www.universitedesfemmes.be/03_bibliotheque.php">www.universitedesfemmes.be/03_bibliotheque.php</a>  <i>The library strives to cover all scientific fields in which feminist studies are conducted. The collection consists of 10,000 volumes and 250 periodicals. The library has started to develop a French women's thesaurus.</i></p> <p>Fonds Suzan Daniel (A)  <a href="http://www.fondssuzandaniel.be">www.fondssuzandaniel.be</a>  <i>The organization wants to collect, order and make available all kinds of materials from the gay/lesbian past.  Another important aspect that FSD cherishes is the creation of an "archival consciousness" within the Belgian public.</i></p> <p>RoSa Bibliotheek, documentatiecentrum en archief voor gelijke kansen, feminisme en vrouwenstudies (A)  <a href="http://www.rosadoc.be">www.rosadoc.be</a>  <i>Documentation center and archive for equal opportunity, feminism and Women's Studies. The RoSa website offers concise, conveniently arranged, ready- to-use information.</i></p> <p>Sophia (C)  <a href="http://www.sophia.be">www.sophia.be</a>  <i>Belgian Network for Gender Studies. Promotes research and education within the field of women's and gender studies in Belgium, stresses the importance of these fields and their relevance in the development of women-friendly policies.</i></p>
Bulgaria	<p>The Bulgarian Fund for Women (C)  <a href="http://www.bgfundforwomen.org">www.bgfundforwomen.org</a>  <i>Indigenous donor for local NGOs that work on women's and girl's rights, on real gender equality in all social spheres and on the elimination of all forms of discrimination. Their 'resource center' offers (statistical) documents on Bulgaria.</i></p> <p>Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (C)  <a href="http://www.bgrf.org">www.bgrf.org</a>  <i>Independent non-governmental organization that promotes social equality and women's human rights in Bulgaria through research, education and advocacy programs.</i></p> <p>Center of Women's Studies and Policies (C)  <a href="http://www.cwsp.bg">www.cwsp.bg</a>  <i>CWSP continues and enhances the work on women's, gender and equal opportunities issues in Bulgaria and further develops new areas of expertise and activities. The library holds Bulgarian legal texts as well as links to international legal documents. The publications of CWSP are also presented here. The library offers articles and papers of Bulgarian and foreign authors treating different gender issues</i></p>
Cyprus	<p>MIGS Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (C)  <a href="http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org">www.medinstgenderstudies.org</a>  <i>The Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) (Reg. no. 234) is a non-profit organization which promotes and contributes to projects of social, political, and economic themes relating to gender with an emphasis on the Mediterranean region.</i></p>

Czech Republic	<p>Gender Studies Library and Information Center (C)  <a href="http://www.en.genderstudies.cz">www.en.genderstudies.cz</a>  <i>Non-governmental non-profit organization that has performed the function of an information, consultation and education center in the area of relations between women and men and their position in society. The goal of the organization is to gather, analyze, work with and disseminate further information related to gender-relevant issues.</i></p>
	<p>Women's Memory (A)  <a href="http://www.womensmemory.net">www.womensmemory.net</a>  <i>The project is focused on the recording of life experience and opinions of women in three generations (born between 1920-1960) using oral history and narrative interview methods.</i></p>
Denmark	<p>Kvindehistorisk Samling (B)  <a href="http://www.statsbiblioteket.dk/forbiblioteker/services/specialsamlinger/kvindehistorisksamling">www.statsbiblioteket.dk/forbiblioteker/services/specialsamlinger/kvindehistorisksamling</a>  <i>The archive traces, collects and registers documents and studies of significance for (Danish) women's history, and provides documentation and information on women's studies.</i></p>
	<p>KVINFO Danish Centre for Gender, Equality and Ethnicity (A)  <a href="http://forside.kvinfo.dk/">http://forside.kvinfo.dk/</a>  <i>The key role of KVINFO is to initiate research and disseminate information and findings, and to contribute to the development of an equal society. Through its work, KVINFO ensures the documentation and communication of knowledge about gender, equality and ethnicity – both in Denmark and around the world.</i></p>
Estonia	<p>ENUT – The Estonian Women's Studies and Resource Centre (A)  <a href="http://www.enut.ee">www.enut.ee</a>  <i>Grassroots, non-profit, non-governmental organization open to the public. It was registered in April 1997. The center, located at Tallinn University, is the first women's resource center in Estonia and it includes a specialized library on women's and gender issues.</i></p>
	<p>Re.Act.Feminism (E)  <a href="http://www.reactfeminism.org">www.reactfeminism.org</a>  <i>Presents feminist, gender-critical and queer performance art by over 120 artists and artist collectives from the 1960s to the beginning of the 1980s, as well as contemporary positions. The focus is on Eastern and Western Europe, the Mediterranean and Middle East, the US and several countries in Latin America.</i></p>
Finland	<p>MINNA Centre for Gender Equality Information in Finland (A)  <a href="http://www.minna.fi">www.minna.fi</a>  <i>Center and website for information and research on gender equality in Finland. The objective of Minna is to provide services for the public administration, politicians, gender equality actors, scholars, students, NGOs and the general public.</i></p>
France	<p>Centre des Archives du Féminisme (A)  <a href="http://www.archivesdufeminisme.fr">www.archivesdufeminisme.fr</a>  <i>The Association of Feminist Archives aims to participate in writing the history of feminism in France. Therefore the association seeks to collect, preserve feminists' personal and organizational papers concerning women's rights and make them available to the public.</i></p>
	<p>ARCL – Archives Recherches Cultures Lesbiennes (A)  <a href="http://arcl.free.fr">http://arcl.free.fr</a>  <i>A library and archive of feminist movements and lesbians.</i></p>

France (cont'd)	<p>Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand (A)  <a href="http://bspe-p-pub.paris.fr/Paris/?fn=SetLibraryGroup&amp;q=BMD">http://bspe-p-pub.paris.fr/Paris/?fn=SetLibraryGroup&amp;q=BMD</a>  <i>The collection dates goes back to the 17th century and includes more than 4,000 letters written by women writers, artists, scientists, travelers, feminists, politicians and journalists. It also includes paintings, engravings, postcards and various works of arts.</i></p>
	<p>Centre Audiovisuel Simone de Beauvoir (A)  <a href="http://www.centre-simone-de-beauvoir.com">www.centre-simone-de-beauvoir.com</a>  <i>The mission of the Centre Audiovisuel Simone de Beauvoir is to gather all audiovisual documents on women's rights, fights, art and creation, and to publicize, promote and distribute them.</i></p>
	<p>La Conservatoire des Archives et des Mémoires LGBT (A)  <a href="http://www.archiveshomo.info/archives/conservatoire.htm">www.archiveshomo.info/archives/conservatoire.htm</a>  <i>Archive and documentation center established to collect, preserve and make available the history of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people in France.</i></p>
Germany	<p>Alice-Salomon Archiv Berlin (A)  <a href="http://www.alice-salomon-archiv.de">www.alice-salomon-archiv.de</a>  <i>In cooperation with the Archive of the Pestalozzi-Froebel-Haus the Alice-Salomon Archive was established in 2000 as a center to document the development of modern social education and social work. The archive presents a collection of Alice Salomon's writings and belongs to the Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences.</i></p>
	<p>ausZeiten Bochum (A)  <a href="http://www.auszeiten-frauenarchiv.de">www.auszeiten-frauenarchiv.de</a>  <i>The archive collects and preserves documents on women's organizations and activism, with emphasis on lesbian culture, regional women's history, (DDR) women's movements and film. The material ranges from newsletters to brochures and posters, from a wide variety of women's initiatives.</i></p>
	<p>BAF Bildungszentrum &amp; Archiv zur Frauengeschichte Baden-Württembergs Tübingen (A)  <a href="http://www.baf-tuebingen.de">www.baf-tuebingen.de</a>  <i>BAF is an educational center and archive specialized in women's history and has a small library.</i></p>
	<p>belladonna Bremen (C)  <a href="http://www.belladonna-bremen.de">www.belladonna-bremen.de</a>  <i>belladonna, center for women's culture, education and economics, was founded in Bremen in 1986 with the aim of promoting the political, social and cultural education of women. The belladonna's archive is one of the largest archives on women's issues in the German-speaking region.</i></p>
	<p>Bildwechsel (A)  <a href="http://www.bildwechsel.org">www.bildwechsel.org</a>  <i>The Bildwechsel umbrella organization aims to promote women's art and culture in the field of audiovisual media arts.</i></p>
	<p>Deutscher Staatsbürgerinnen-Verband Bibliothek und Archiv Berlin (C)  <a href="http://www.staatsbuengerinnen.org">www.staatsbuengerinnen.org</a>  <i>The archive (AdDSiV) and library (BdDSiV) house not only documents concerning the history of the women's movement with emphasis on the period before 1933 but also a collection of women's biographies and historical photographs.</i></p>
	<p>FFBIZ Frauenforschungs-, -bildungs- und -informationszentrum Berlin (A)  <a href="http://www.ffbiz.de">www.ffbiz.de</a>  <i>FFBIZ is the archive of feminism and the women's movement in Germany. It collects and processes documents on the history of women mostly since 1968 in Berlin, Germany and all other parts of the world for interdisciplinary research and gender studies.</i></p>

Germany (cont'd)	<p>FemBio (A)  <a href="http://www.fembio.org/biographie.php">www.fembio.org/biographie.php</a>  <i>The Great FemBio database (offline) recorded over 31,000 important women of all eras and countries that can be searched according to various criteria (approximately 250 attributes) and linked. Data have been collected since 1982, and new data is added every day.</i></p>
	<p>Frauenarchiv Lieselle Bochum (B)  <a href="http://www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/frauenarchiv/">www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/frauenarchiv/</a>  <i>Frauenarchiv Lieselle was established by a group of women historians as an independent archive to preserve the historical heritage of women. The archive also houses a library with lesbian literature.</i></p>
	<p>Frauenbibliothek Saar (A)  <a href="http://www.frauenbibliothek-saar.de">www.frauenbibliothek-saar.de</a>  <i>Specialized library and women's studies documentation center.</i></p>
	<p>FrauenMediaTurm Köln (A)  <a href="http://www.frauenmediaturm.de">www.frauenmediaturm.de</a>  <i>FrauenMediaTurm holds the most comprehensive and technically best equipped scientific archives on women's issues in German-speaking countries.</i></p>
	<p>Frauenstadtarchiv Dresden (A)  <a href="http://www.frauenstadtarchiv.de">www.frauenstadtarchiv.de</a>  <i>Archives, documentation center and promoter of women's education.</i></p>
	<p>Gender Library at CtrG Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (B)  <a href="http://www.gender.hu-berlin.de">www.gender.hu-berlin.de</a>  <i>The CtrG's Gender Library is an academic special library, founded in April 1990, The Gender Library is a modern library — not a sort of storehouse for literature, but rather an information hub catering to the needs of a community with an online Gender Library catalogue and weblog.</i></p>
	<p>GrauZone Archiv der Ostdeutsche Frauenbewegung Berlin (A)  <a href="http://www.havemann-gesellschaft.de/grauzone/start2.html">www.havemann-gesellschaft.de/grauzone/start2.html</a>  <i>Books, grey literature and periodicals about women in East-Germany and abroad, letters, reports, notes, posters, audiotapes, photos, videos and personal papers by and about women who were active in over 100 women's groups in East Germany. The archive also collected documents from the „Unabhängiger Frauenverband“ (independent women's league), which was active from 1989 to 1998.</i></p>
	<p>hamburger frauen*bibliothek Hamburg (A)  <a href="http://hhhfb.wordpress.com/">http://hhhfb.wordpress.com/</a>  <i>This cooperation of three women's libraries in Hamburg collects literature and provides access through a virtual catalog.</i></p>
	<p>Helene-Lange Archiv Berlin (A)  <a href="http://www.landesarchiv-berlin.de/lab-neu/03_06.htm">www.landesarchiv-berlin.de/lab-neu/03_06.htm</a>  <i>The collection, comprised of approximately 100 meters of material, focuses on the period from 1890 until 1933, and from 1945 up until the present. The core of the HLA is the archive of the Bundes Deutscher Frauenvereine.</i></p>
	<p>Kölner Frauengeschichtsverein (C)  <a href="http://www.frauengeschichtsverein.de">www.frauengeschichtsverein.de</a>  <i>As a platform for women's history in Cologne, the organization explores the history of the town, offers guided tours and collect materials in its archive and library.</i></p>
	<p>Lila Archiv Meiningen (A)  <a href="http://www.lilaarchiv.de">www.lilaarchiv.de</a>  <i>The archive offers information about women's history, sex and gender and women's organizations, mostly in connection with the GDR and Eastern Europe.</i></p>

Germany (cont'd)	<p>Louise-Otto-Peters Archiv Leipzig (A)  <a href="http://www.louiseottopeters-gesellschaft.de">www.louiseottopeters-gesellschaft.de</a>  <i>In the archive you can find all publications about and by Louise Otto-Peters including articles, books and journals for and about women, edited by her like "Frauen-Zeitung" (1848-1852) and "Neue Bahnen" (1866-1912).</i></p>
	<p>MONAliesA Frauen- &amp; Genderbibliothek Leipzig (A)  <a href="http://monaliesa.wordpress.com/">http://monaliesa.wordpress.com/</a>  <i>The non-profit Leipzig-based organization Monaliesa e.V. maintains, since 1990, a professional library, archive, educational and cultural works to preserve and make available the diversity of feminist ideas and concepts as well as the rich heritage of the work of women in politics, science and social services.</i></p>
	<p>Spinnboden Lesbenarchiv und Bibliothek Berlin (A)  <a href="http://www.spinnboden.de">www.spinnboden.de</a>  <i>The largest collection of products and traces of lesbian existence in Europe</i></p>
	<p>Stiftung Archiv der Deutschen Frauenbewegung Kassel (A)  <a href="http://www.addf-kassel.de">www.addf-kassel.de</a>  <i>Archive and a specialized library concerning the history of women and women's movements from the period between 1800 and the 1960s.</i></p>
	<p>Terre des femmes Berlin (C)  <a href="http://www.frauenrechte.de">www.frauenrechte.de</a>  <i>TERRE DES FEMMES' archives contain a growing collection of specialist material on international human and women's rights. A library of selected publications, an extensive body of newspaper articles, magazines, pamphlets, theses, dissertations, and other publications, as well as digitally stored files offer a variety of ways to acquire a differentiated insight into women's rights issues.</i></p>
Greece	<p>KETHI Research Center for Gender Equality (C)  <a href="http://www.kethi.gr">www.kethi.gr</a>  <i>Non-profit organization focused on the advancement of women in all areas of political, economic and social life. The documentation unit develops databases and documentation material and collects and distributes information on issues pertaining to women's rights and gender equality policies.</i></p>
	<p>Library for Women's Issues (A)  <a href="http://www.isotita.gr">www.isotita.gr</a>  <i>Collects documentation in Greek and other languages related to issues of gender equality and the history of the Greek women's movement.</i></p>
	<p>Panteion University Gender &amp; Equality Studies (B)  <a href="http://www.genderpanteion.gr">www.genderpanteion.gr</a>  <i>The „Digitalization of the Struggle of the League for the Rights of Woman 1923-1967" program aims at converting the magazine's archives from analogue to digital form and storing its data in a high-tech data base accessible via the website of Panteion University's center for gender studies.</i></p>
Hungary	<p>Central European University Dept. of Gender Studies (B)  <a href="http://gender.ceu.hu/">http://gender.ceu.hu/</a>  <i>The Gender Studies Unit at CEU runs a postgraduate program in Gender Studies offering MA and PhD degrees. In addition, the Gender Studies Unit serves as an organizational base for non-degree studies in various forms, as well as for research and other activities in the field.</i></p>
	<p>Metropolitan Ervin Szabó Library  <a href="http://www.fszek.hu/">http://www.fszek.hu/</a>  <i>The Metropolitan Ervin Szabo Library, is a public library established in 1904, and provides the services of the public library network for the inhabitants in Budapest. It is also a reference library in sociology and holds many materials relevant to gender studies research.</i></p>

Hungary (cont'd)	<p>TARKI Gender Data Archive (C)  <a href="http://www.tarki.hu">www.tarki.hu</a>  <i>The social situation of women and social inequalities between men and women have become a wider field of research in the last ten years in Hungary. TARKI aims to introduce the results of empirical research surveys and to provide access to databases in this field of study with the aim of promoting the development of researchers' networks.</i></p>
Ireland	<p>Attic Press Collection Boole Library (B)  <a href="http://booleweb.ucc.ie/index.php?pageID=260">http://booleweb.ucc.ie/index.php?pageID=260</a>  <i>The core sections of the collection relate to the activities of Conroy while working as a librarian within the research unit of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU), to Irish Feminist Information (IFI) and to Attic Press. The material dates from the early seventies to the 1990s.</i></p> <p>Women's History Association of Ireland (C)  <a href="http://whai.ie/">http://whai.ie/</a>  <i>Founded in 1989, the aim of the WHAI is to promote research into the history of women in Ireland. The Women's History Project aims to survey, list and publish historical documents relating to the history of women in Ireland. It provides a long list of links to sister-libraries, centers, departments, and websites.</i></p>
Italy	<p>AARDT Archivi Riuniti delle Donne (A)  <a href="http://www.archividonneticino.ch">www.archividonneticino.ch</a>  <i>The archive is focused on guaranteeing the conservation and continuing research of important information pertaining to women and their history in Italy. The collection contains 100 meters of women's personal archives, archives of associations and women's periodicals.</i></p> <p>Archivia (A)  <a href="http://www.archiviaabcd.it">www.archiviaabcd.it</a>  <i>The Women's library and archives 'Archivia' was established within the women's center Casa Internazionale delle Donne. Its aim is to collect, sort, maintain, enhance, and promote feminist culture and materials and to spread this knowledge to a wider audience.</i></p> <p>Archivio Storico delle Donne (Frauenarchivs Bozen) (A)  <a href="http://www.frauenarchiv.bz.it">www.frauenarchiv.bz.it</a>  <i>Goals: Acquisition and collection of archives of Women's history within the historic area of Tyrol, the support of research on women's and gender history and of initiatives to further the education and information in this field.</i></p> <p>Biblioteca Italiana delle Donne (A)  <a href="http://www.women.it/bibliotecadelledonne/">www.women.it/bibliotecadelledonne/</a>  <i>The Italian Women's Library, together with the Women's Archive, is part of the Women's Documentation, Research and Initiative Center (CDD) and is the principal collection specialized in women's culture, gender and feminist studies in Italy. The Library has a collection of more than 30,000 books.</i></p> <p>Cassero Gay Lesbian Center (A)  <a href="http://www.cassero.it">www.cassero.it</a>  <i>The Documentation Center has been collecting, storing and preserving cultural and GLBT texts since 1983. It contains Italian and international books, videos, magazines, historical documents, photographs, and press clippings. It is the largest gay and lesbian archive in Italy and among the largest in Europe.</i></p> <p>CDD Centro Documentazione Donna (A)  <a href="http://www.informadonna.fc.it">www.informadonna.fc.it</a>  <i>The library houses fiction, non-fiction – with a large section of essays on various women's issues, and documents produced by the women's movement in recent decades.</i></p>



Italy (cont'd)	<p>Fondazione Elvira Badaracco (A)  <a href="http://www.fondazionebadaracco.it">www.fondazionebadaracco.it</a>  <i>The center collects and organizes women's oral and written productions. The archive preserves materials relating to women's history and feminism and the library focuses on collecting documents of the political and cultural heritage of women.</i></p>
	<p>Lilith (D)  <a href="http://www.retelilith.it">www.retelilith.it</a>  <i>The Network of women's documentation centers, archives and libraries collects and transmits information and material about women's history, thought, politics and research. It contains more than 37,000 bibliographic records on critical thinking on feminism and women's movements in Italy and lesbians from the sixties to today.</i></p>
Latvia	<p>Centre for Gender Studies (DzSC) (B)  <a href="http://www.lu.lv/eng/general/administrative/studycentres/gender-studies-centre">www.lu.lv/eng/general/administrative/studycentres/gender-studies-centre</a>  <i>Founded in January 1998 at the University of Latvia, Dzintes Studiju Centrs (DzSC) is the first educational and research center in Latvia to approach various women's and gender issues.</i></p>
Lithuania	<p>Vilnius University Gender Studies Centre (B)  <a href="http://www.lsc.vu.lt/index.php?id=323">www.lsc.vu.lt/index.php?id=323</a>  <i>The library was established concurrently with the center and presently houses 2,800 volumes on women's, men's and gender studies. It is the only library in Lithuania to focus on gender and is one of the largest in the Baltics.</i></p>
Luxembourg	<p>CID-Femmes (A)  <a href="http://www.cid-femmes.lu">www.cid-femmes.lu</a>  <i>Cid-femmes is an independent library and research center in Luxembourg, offering more than 28,000 books, CDs, music scores and periodicals relating to women, feminism and gender topics. The center has a special section entitled Euterpe (Women and Music / e.g. more than 1,600 music scores, the archives of Luxembourg's composers).</i></p>
Malta	<p>MCWO Malta Confederation of Women's Organisations (A)  <a href="http://www.mcwo.net">www.mcwo.net</a>  <i>Represents the concerns, needs and interests of women from all walks of life through dialogue and networking at a national, European and international level.</i></p>
Netherlands	<p>Aletta Institute for Women's History (A)  <a href="http://www.aletta.nu">www.aletta.nu</a>  <i>Aletta (formerly the IIAV) is the home of the renowned collection, the International Archives for the Women's Movement. By collecting and making our heritage available, Aletta aims to inspire, to expand knowledge on the position of women and to promote research in this area.</i></p>
	<p>Bottom of Form</p>
	<p>Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland (E)  <a href="http://www.historici.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/DVN">www.historici.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/DVN</a>  <i>The digital women's lexicon provides information about remarkable women in the history of the Netherlands and its overseas territories up until now. In short biographical sketches information is provided about once famous and influential women that are now as good as forgotten.</i></p>
	<p>IHLIA International Homo-Lesbian Information Centre and Archives (A)  <a href="http://www.ihlia.nl">www.ihlia.nl</a>  <i>IHLIA is the largest LGBT-archive and information center in Europe, and collects, catalogues and supplies materials that can be used for academic research, term papers and student theses.</i></p>

Poland	<p>Feminoteka (A)  <a href="http://www.feminoteka.pl">http://www.feminoteka.pl</a>  <i>Feminoteka was established in 2001, as a feminist information service and bookstore. From the very beginning, this initiative has been independent from any organization or institution, yet it has been co-operating with many of them.</i></p>
	<p>NEWW Network of East and West Women (D)  <a href="http://www.neww.eu">www.neww.eu</a>  <i>International communication and resource network supporting dialogue, informational exchange, and activism among those concerned about the status of women in Central and Eastern Europe, the Newly Independent States, and the Russian Federation. NEWW coordinates research and advocacy that supports women's equality and full participation in all aspects of public and private life.</i></p>
	<p>Women's Studies Centre – University of Lodz (B)  <a href="http://www.gender.uni.lodz.pl/eng/aktualnosci.html">www.gender.uni.lodz.pl/eng/aktualnosci.html</a>  <i>Women's Studies Centre (WSC) was founded by Prof. Elżbieta H. Oleksy at the University of Łódź in 1992. It is not only the first academic institution of this type in Poland but also the oldest women's/gender studies center in Central and Eastern Europe.</i></p>
Portugal	<p>APEM Associação Portuguesa de Estudos Sobre as Mulheres (D)  <a href="http://www.apem-estudos.org">www.apem-estudos.org</a>  <i>The Portuguese Women's Studies Association was founded in 1991 to support, promote and encourage women's, gender and feminist studies in all areas of knowledge.</i></p>
	<p>UMAR Centro de Cultura e Intervenção Feminista (C)  <a href="http://centrodeculturaeintervencaoefeminista.wordpress.com/">http://centrodeculturaeintervencaoefeminista.wordpress.com/</a>  <i>The center maintains the documents of women's organizations and feminist groups that were active in Portugal and/or that maintained international relationships. The center also maintains a digital portal that allows users to access resources and memories from the Second Wave of Portuguese feminism.</i></p>
Romania	<p>AnA Society for Feminist Analyses (C)  <a href="http://www.anasaf.ro">www.anasaf.ro</a>  <i>Independent non-governmental organization committed to understanding and improving the status of women in Romania; promoting research on the social position of women in contemporary Romanian society; fostering the introduction of women's studies in university curricula..</i></p>
	<p>Biblioteca Alternativa (A)  <a href="http://biblioteca-alternativa.noblogs.org/">http://biblioteca-alternativa.noblogs.org/</a>  <i>Gathers over 600 books and 300 magazines/pamphlets that have gone from hand to hand to reach this space. These are grouped in various fields: sociology/anthropology, anarchism/social movements/direct action, gender/sexuality/LGBTQ, colonialism/militarism, repression/political prisoners, literature, art/photography, etc.</i></p>
Slovakia	<p>Aspekt (A)  <a href="http://www.aspekt.sk">www.aspekt.sk</a>  <i>Library Aspekt specializes in literature and feminist and gender issues and offers a wide range of literature and fiction in various languages (except Slovak and Czech mostly in English, German and Polish). Keeps posters, brochures, periodicals, audio documents and various other materials.</i></p>
Slovenia	<p>Lezbične, Feministične in ženske študije (E)  <a href="http://lezbicnofeministicnauniverza.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/bibliografija-lfu-lezbic48dne-feministic48dne-in-c5beenske-c5a1tudije-2011.pdf">http://lezbicnofeministicnauniverza.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/bibliografija-lfu-lezbic48dne-feministic48dne-in-c5beenske-c5a1tudije-2011.pdf</a>  <i>Bibliography of books, thematic magazines and catalogues in Slovene.</i></p>

Slovenia (cont'd)	<p>ŠKUC-LL (A, E)  <a href="http://www.ljudmila.org/lesbo/">www.ljudmila.org/lesbo/</a>  <i>Through its culturally and politically engaged projects the organization combats lesbo- and homophobia. Includes a digital bibliography of literature with a lesbian/gay theme and a lesbian library with limited opening hours.</i></p>
Spain	<p>Biblioteca de Mujeres (A)  <a href="http://www.mujerpalabra.net/bibliotecademujeres/">www.mujerpalabra.net/bibliotecademujeres/</a>  <i>The Biblioteca de Mujeres was created in 1985 with the aim of gathering the highest possible number of documents on women. The BdM's collection consists of approx. 25,000 volumes, and also magazines, comics, posters, badges, stamps, etc.</i></p> <p>CIRD Centre d'Informació i Recursos per a les Dones (A)  <a href="http://w3.bcn.cat/dones/0.4022.170957416_170962267_1.00.html">http://w3.bcn.cat/dones/0.4022.170957416_170962267_1.00.html</a>  <i>The documentation center of CIRD promotes inquiry, knowledge, study, dissemination and preservation of documents related to gender studies, women's movements, and other topics of interest to women of Barcelona.</i></p> <p>L'Institut Català de les Dones – Catalan Institute for Women (B)  <a href="http://www20.gencat.cat/portal/site/icdones">www20.gencat.cat/portal/site/icdones</a>  <i>The documentation center of the Catalan Women's Institute promotes and encourages the study and research on women through collecting, organizing and disseminating bibliographic information and documents.</i></p> <p>IPES ELKARTEA Women's Library and Documentation Center (A)  <a href="http://www.ipesmujeres.org/biblioteca/">www.ipesmujeres.org/biblioteca/</a>  <i>IPES ELKARTEA focuses on themes relating to the social sciences. The institute is concerned with women and feminism.</i></p> <p>Red de Centros de Documentación y Bibliotecas de Mujeres (D)  <a href="http://www.inmujer.gob.es/servRecursos/centroDocumentacion/home.htm">http://www.inmujer.gob.es/servRecursos/centroDocumentacion/home.htm</a>  <i>Spanish integrated network of women's documentation centers and libraries.</i></p>
Sweden	<p>Jamstall (A)  <a href="http://Includegender.org">Includegender.org</a>  <i>Includegender.org gives you tools for the everyday work of gender mainstreaming. In this portal you can find methods, models and interactive tools that simplify, and provide quality assurance for, gender mainstreaming, reports from activities, lists of important years and a great deal else.</i></p> <p>KvinnSam National Resource Library for Gender Studies (B)  <a href="http://www.ub.gu.se/kvinn/">http://www.ub.gu.se/kvinn/</a>  <i>KvinnSam is the Swedish National resource library for gender studies and part of Gothenburg University Library. Its principal goals are surveying and cataloguing literature on gender issues and compiling and cataloguing manuscript material on women's history. KvinnSam produces several databases and other online resources.</i></p> <p>Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research (A)  <a href="http://www.genus.se">www.genus.se</a>  <i>The Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research at the University of Gothenburg monitors, analyzes and issues information about the development, status and capacity of gender research in Sweden.</i></p>
United Kingdom	<p>Feminist Archive North (A)  <a href="http://www.feministarchivenorth.org.uk">www.feministarchivenorth.org.uk</a>  <i>The Feminist Archive North (FAN) holds a wide variety of material relating to the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) from 1969 to the present. Topics covered by FAN include the women's peace movement, women's studies, women and development, and violence against women.</i></p>

United Kingdom (cont'd)	<p>Feminist Archive South (A)  <a href="http://www.feministarchivenorth.org.uk/feministarchivesouth/home.htm">www.feministarchivenorth.org.uk/feministarchivesouth/home.htm</a>  <i>The Feminist Archive (South) in Bristol, England, houses national and international material of the second wave of feminism (roughly 1960-2000).</i></p>
	<p>The Feminist Library (A)  <a href="http://feministlibrary.co.uk/">http://feministlibrary.co.uk/</a>  <i>The Feminist Library is a large archive collection of Women's Liberation Movement literature, particularly second-wave materials dating from the late 1960s to the 1990s.</i></p>
	<p>Glasgow women's library (A)  <a href="http://womenslibrary.org.uk/">http://womenslibrary.org.uk/</a>  <i>Glasgow Women's Library's mission is to celebrate the lives and achievements of women, champion their historical, cultural and political contributions and act as a catalyst to eradicate the gender gap that contributes to widespread inequalities in Scotland.</i></p>
	<p>HistorytoHerstory (E)  <a href="http://www.historytoherstory.org.uk">www.historytoherstory.org.uk</a>  <i>Over 80,000 archive pages illustrating Yorkshire women's lives over 800 years.</i></p>
	<p>Women's Archive of Wales (A)  <a href="http://www.womensarchivewales.org">www.womensarchivewales.org</a>  <i>Broad range of archival, photographic and other materials, such as diaries, scrapbooks, the minute books of women's organizations, and literary manuscripts. All of these materials illustrate women's history in Wales and women's experiences in a range of spheres including the domestic, political, religious, economic, cultural and social.</i></p>
	<p>The Women's Library (B)  <a href="http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/thewomenslibrary/">http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/thewomenslibrary/</a>  <i>The Women's Library exists to document and explore the past, present and future lives of women in Britain and houses the most extensive resource for women's history in the UK.</i></p>
	<p>Women's Liberation Music Archive (E)  <a href="http://womensliberationmusicarchive.wordpress.com/">http://womensliberationmusicarchive.wordpress.com/</a>  <i>Aim is to research and document the feminist bands, musicians and related projects of the 1970s and 80s, creating a collection of written and oral histories and memorabilia.</i></p>

## Major portals and networks

ATGENDER the European Association for Gender Research, Education and Documentation

[www.atgender.eu](http://www.atgender.eu)

*Broad association for academics, practitioners, activists and institutions in the field of Women's and Gender Studies, Feminist Research, women's rights, gender equality and diversity. The association constitutes a permanent structure for the growing field of knowledge and practice in Europe.*

AWID Association for Women's Rights in Development

[www.awid.org](http://www.awid.org)

*AWID's mission is to strengthen the voice, impact and influence of women's rights advocates, organizations and movements internationally to effectively advance the rights of women.*

## EIGE European Institute for Gender Equality

[www.eige.europa.eu](http://www.eige.europa.eu)

*European Agency which supports the EU and its Member States in their efforts to promote gender equality, to fight discrimination based on sex and to raise awareness about gender equality issues. Its tasks are to collect and analyze comparable data on gender issues, to develop methodological tools and to facilitate the exchange of best practices and dialogue among stakeholders.*

## FRAGEN

[www.fragen.nu](http://www.fragen.nu)

*In the FRAGEN project women's libraries and academic researchers throughout Europe have been selecting core feminist texts that were influential in the development of feminist ideas in the 1970s and 80s. The texts from across Europe have been digitized and are available online on the FRAGEN website. The objective of the project is to make information available which will allow for comparative research into the history of feminist ideas in different European countries.*

## GEA Gender and Education Association

[www.genderandeducation.com](http://www.genderandeducation.com)

*Formally established in 2002 (though active from 1997 onwards), the association works to challenge and eradicate sexism and gender inequality within and through education.*

## i.d.a. informieren.dokumentieren.archivieren.

[www.ida-dachverband.de](http://www.ida-dachverband.de)

*Umbrella organization of German-language lesbian/women's libraries, archives, and documentation centers. Goals are networking, regular professional personal exchange of knowledge and ideas, further education, as well as the development of joint public relations.*

## Mapping the World of Women's Information Services

[www.aletta.nu/aletta/eng/projects/mapping-the-world](http://www.aletta.nu/aletta/eng/projects/mapping-the-world)

*Online database in which you can find contact information on women and gender information centers, libraries and archives around the world. It currently contains approximately 400 women's information centers from over 140 countries. The database contains addresses, websites, details on the goals of organizations, collection subjects and more.*

## NIKK Nordic Information on Gender

[www.nikk.no](http://www.nikk.no)

*NIKK gathers and disseminates research, policy and practice in the area of gender equality in a Nordic perspective to a broad group of interested parties. Comparative information on current equality and gender research in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden is communicated. The aim is that the knowledge shared will serve as a basis for policy discussions in the Nordic countries and internationally.*

## UN-Women United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

[www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)

*The creation of UN Women came about as part of the UN reform agenda, bringing together resources and mandates for greater impact. Its website provides, amongst other things, the UN Women annual reports and the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development.*

## Virtual Library Women's History

[www.iisg.nl/w3v/womenshistory](http://www.iisg.nl/w3v/womenshistory)

*The main purposes of this virtual library are to list women's history institutions and organizations, locate archival and library collections, and provide links to Internet resources on women's history. In addition, also included are a list of women's studies journals and a few comprehensive link collections useful as a starting point for searching the Internet for women's studies in general.*

## WAVE Women Against Violence Europe

[www.wave-network.org](http://www.wave-network.org)

*WAVE is a network today of approximately 4,000 European women's non-governmental organizations including women's shelters, crisis hotlines, and organizations focusing on prevention and training, working to end violence against women and children.*

## Websites on Women Database

[www.aletta.nu/aletta/eng/collections/websites\\_on\\_women](http://www.aletta.nu/aletta/eng/collections/websites_on_women)

*Database containing information about some of the most important websites for, about, and by women. These websites, selected from over 100 different countries, have been fully catalogued for easy searching.*

## WINE Women's Information Network of Europe

<http://winenetworkeurope.wordpress.com>

*WINE is a network of libraries, archives, and information centers across Europe. The purpose of the network is to provide a common platform to help facilitate discussion and information-sharing in the areas of gender, feminist and women's studies and research. Currently more than 50 organizations from many countries are members of WINE.*

## Wikigender

[www.wikigender.org](http://www.wikigender.org)

*Project initiated by the OECD development center to facilitate the exchange and improve the knowledge on gender equality-related issues around the world. A particular focus lies on gathering empirical evidence and identifying adequate statistics to measure gender equality.*

## Women's Thesaurus

[www.aletta.nu/aletta/eng/collections/vrouwenthesaurus](http://www.aletta.nu/aletta/eng/collections/vrouwenthesaurus)

*Tool for indexing and retrieving women's information in databases, on the internet and in the collections of libraries and archives. The online Thesaurus provides access to the rich cross-references and multiple levels of relationships within the thesaurus.*

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For a comprehensive list of more than 400 Women/Gender libraries and information centers around the world please consult:

<http://www.atria-kennisinstituut.nl/aletta/eng/collections/informatiecentra>.

Changes and additions can be reported to: [mapping@atria-kennisinstituut.nl](mailto:mapping@atria-kennisinstituut.nl); there is also a link to Mapping on the AtGender website.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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